

Living in the Present. How do you do it?

Headline: Living in the present is tough! We may have regrets about the past, but more likely, we have worries about the future. How can we make a step change for ourselves and our families to better live in the present moment?

Objective: Let us reflect on our relationship with God. God is not a God of the past. He is not a God of the future. He is a God of the present moment. If we are to enter into a relationship with God, then we must realize that we can only encounter Him in the present moment. To Him, all time is the Here and Now, so to speak. And we must seek Him here and now, in this present moment alone.

Song Suggestion: Be Not Afraid

Bible and Catechism Readings:

Isaiah 41:10

Do not fear: I am with you; do not be anxious: I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

Matt 6:25, 31-34

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?
So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?'
All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil.

Phil 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Catechism 2659

We learn to pray at certain moments by hearing the Word of the Lord and sharing in his Paschal mystery, but his Spirit is offered us at all times, in the events of each day, to make prayer spring up from us. Jesus' teaching about praying to our Father is in the same vein as his teaching about providence: time is in the Father's hands; it is in the present that we encounter him, not yesterday nor tomorrow, but today: "O that today you would hearken to his voice! Harden not your hearts."

Saint: Saint Faustina Kowalska - Saint Faustina fostered in her soul a spirit of humility and abandonment to God's desires. She learned to trust God more and more, and submitted her will to His holy will. That is how our Lord was able to use her so freely to accomplish the great mission He had for her in spreading the devotion to Divine Mercy. He needed her humble heart. He needed her to be faithful in small things — in all the details of her vocation.

Saint Faustina expressed her gratitude, and she moved her will in faith to be united to God's will. She wrote in her Diary:

O My God, When I look into the future, I am frightened, But why plunge into the future? Only the present moment is precious to me, As the future may never enter my soul at all. It is no longer in my power to change,

correct, or add to the past; For neither sages nor prophets could do that. And so, what the past has embraced, I must entrust to God. O present moment, you belong to me, whole and entire. I desire to use you as best I can. And although I am weak and small, You grant me the grace of Your omnipotence. And so, trusting in Your mercy, I walk through life like a little child, Offering You each day this heart Burning with love for your greater glory (Diary, 2)

Vignette: – (From this blog: <https://holvandhealthycatholic.com/blog/2018/5/19/the-present-moment>)

We registered at the Catholic Church in Hampstead, New Hampshire and I'll never forget attending our first social event at St. Ann because we met a very wise priest. He asked us about our lives and we shared all of our plans and goals to start a family, expand our careers and much more.

I will never forget his reply to us. He said these two little words, "Just this." He told us to focus on the here and now, the present moment, whatever was happening right here before us in our lives and to let the future unfold with full trust in God's plans for us.

When we replay past events in our minds, with worry or regret, we miss the joys and sorrows of the present moment. We can't change the past anyway, but in our humanness we go there, or perhaps we're led there by the evil one, and what good does that do for our soul?

If we look ahead to the future, the present moment is sidelined, in fact maligned. Yes, some planning takes place in our lives, but when our future plans overwhelm the present moment, and fill us with unrest and worry, we are not truly lifting our hearts to God and living these words, "Jesus, I trust in you."

I admit that sometimes it's easy to do, to ahead or look back too much, so I am renewing my commitment to "Just this."

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

1. The past casts a shadow over the present whenever we brood over old failures and yesterday's choices. Living in the present moment requires leaving our failures in the confessional and the trusted hands of Jesus and moving forward into his presence. When was the last time you went to confession? Did you leave your sins with Christ, or did you take them with you?
2. Do you have an area in your life that brings you worry? When was the last time you truly turned that worry over to Christ and trusted in his ability to handle it for you?
3. Contemplate your relationships with those you love – how many of those relationships do we conduct in the present moment?
4. Can we suffer one day at a time? Do you know anyone who lived their suffering one day at a time? How did this person's witness impact your life?
5. Do I trust God with the present moment, or do I allow doubts and fears to creep in and take over?

Resources:

1. Book – Interior Freedom, by Jacques Philippe. Outstanding book, and very short! Relevant to this topic is Section II Living in the Present Moment. This is also available as an audio book on the Hallow app. Some highlights:
 - "The past is in the hands of the Merciful God, who can draw benefit from everything: the future is in the hands of the Providence of God who will never forget us. Faith keeps us from living as many people do, oppressed by a burdensome past and a worrisome future. Living in the present moment permits our hearts to expand."
 - "'To love' has a present tense only – Without concerning ourselves about the past or the future, we can decide to believe today, place all our trust in God today, love God and our neighbor today. Whether our good resolutions produce success or failure, next day we begin again, not relying on our own strength but only on God's faithfulness."

- “We can suffer for only one moment – This effort to live in the reality of each moment is of the greatest importance in times of suffering. Nobody has the capacity to suffer for 10 or 20 years; but we have the grace to bear today the suffering that is ours now. Projecting into the future crushes us – not experiencing suffering but anticipating it.”
2. Father Mike Schmitz on Living in the Present Moment:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7LJuWjCTDw>
 - 1 – Identify the season of life you are in, instead of the season of life you want to be in
 - 2 – Be patient - with yourself and the process (of moving into new seasons)
 - 3 – Be active – in the work of today to be prepared for the next season
 - 4 – Be aware of God’s presence in the present moment
 3. In an excellent book by C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape letters*, in Letter 15 this topic of living in the present is addressed. The premise of the book is that a novice devil, Wormwood, is getting letters from his uncle, Screwtape, who is senior devil. In the letters, Screwtape advises Wormwood how to get the soul of his “patient” (you and me) from the “Enemy” (God). Here are 2 links that address this letter.
https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Reflections_2021_01-The-Point-at-which-Time-Touches-Eternity-8157.pdf
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tce5zItIfy8>

Step it up!:

What can you do over the next week/month to make a step change in how you can live in the present? Pick 1 or 2 and give it a try. Some potential examples:

1. Recognize God's Presence:
 - In the Eucharist: Adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist is a powerful way to be present to God.
 - In Creation: Notice the beauty and wonder of the world around you, acknowledging God as the creator.
 - In Others: Be fully present and engaged when interacting with others, recognizing the image of God in them.
2. Practice Mindfulness and Gratitude:
 - Be Present to Your Actions: Focus on what you are doing in the present moment, whether it's work, prayer, or leisure.
 - Offer Gratitude: Take time to thank God for the blessings of the present moment, big or small.
 - Pray Throughout the Day: Use short, frequent prayers to stay connected to God and ask for His guidance.
3. Trust in God's Will:
 - Let Go of Worry: Jesus teaches us not to be anxious about the future, but to trust that God will provide for our needs (Matthew 6:34).
 - Accept God's Plan: Embrace the present moment, trusting that God has a purpose for you in every experience.
 - Seek Retreats: Take time for retreats or quiet reflection to deepen your relationship with God and discern His will.
4. Cultivate a Spirit of Childlike Trust:
 - Approach Life with Simplicity: Live with a sense of wonder and openness, like a child trusting their parent.
 - Release Control: Let go of the need to control every aspect of your life and trust that God is in control.
 - Embrace Opportunities: Be open to the unexpected opportunities and challenges that God brings your way.

Author: Steve Frazer