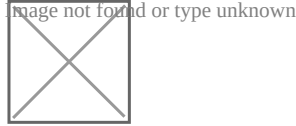


Our Relationship with God: 3. The Prophet Joel (Very Rev. Archimandrite Zacharias (Zacharou))

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The Prophet Joel also gives us a beneficial word that is able to enlighten our mind and to sustain our heart in a perfect relationship with God and with all His creation. He says: 'The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered:

because the sons of men put to shame joy.'[1] According to the Prophet, there is only one joy that deserves our honouring. This is the joy that is sourced in God Himself, because only this joy is perfect and 'full'.[2] The joy that God gives to man works by the Holy Spirit. We honour this precious joy, when we preserve a good conscience and purity of life through the keeping of the holy commandments. This strengthens our heart to stand with courage and fear in the presence of Christ, Who rewards us with the ineffable peace of reconciliation with God and the incorruptible consolation that witnesses to the soul of her eternal salvation. The holy and full joy that Christ promised to His own inspires also fear and wisdom, so as not to have confidence in themselves, but to remain within the considered measure of their created-ness and to have the discernment to use all the natural sources of joy and consolation for the glory of God and for their own sanctification.

When, however, men shame the true and pure joy that emanates from God, then all the natural sources of joy on the earth dry up, and no longer have the power to comfort them, because they are not overshadowed by the life-giving grace of God. They bear within them the mark of self-love and the seed of corruption and death. If, however, the joy of God reigns over our life, then also our relationships with our fellows will be sources of joy and full of creative inspiration and stability.

[1] Cf. Joel 1:12 (LXX).

[2] Cf. John 16:24 and 17:13.