STAY Connected

Journals for Catholic Women

Invite the Holy Spirit into Your Life

Growing in Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control

Deanna G. Bartalini

Table of Contents

Introduction: Cultivating the Fruits of the Holy Spirit 1

1: Joy 13

2: Peace 29

3: Patience 45

4: Faithfulness 61

5: Kindness and Goodness 77

6: Self-Control and Gentleness 93

7: Love 107

Introduction

Cultivating the Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Before we can begin talking about the fruits of the Spirit, there needs to be a brief explanation of the Holy Spirit. Who is the Holy Spirit? What does he do? Why is he important and necessary? Keep in mind that this introduction is not the definitive teaching on the Holy Spirit but rather a way to give our learning and discussion a frame of reference, to have some context, and to have a similar foundation as we dive into the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

God is Trinitarian—a unity, one God in three persons. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct persons, each related to the other: the Father is related to the Son, the Son is related to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to both. And yet each of the three persons is God, whole and entire (see Catechism 252-255). Often people have more knowledge of the Father and Son, so it is good to learn more about the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Holy Spirit? Each time we bless ourselves, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen," we invoke him as part of the Holy Trinity. In the Nicene Creed, we pray, "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets." We celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and remember it each time we pray the Glorious mysteries of the Rosary when we recall the "descent of the Holy Spirit."

Clearly, the Church thinks the Holy Spirit is important, but what about us? We may pray those words and prayers without ever having a connection with or understanding of the Holy Spirit. Do we need the Holy Spirit?

I think we do—and not only because the Church says so but because I have seen the power and necessity of the Holy Spirit time and again in my journey as a Catholic. As women of faith, who are searching for the best way to live out our faith, we need the Holy Spirit.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that the Holy Spirit reveals God and Christ to us, "We know him only in the movement by which he reveals the Word to us and disposes us to welcome him in faith. The Spirit of truth who 'unveils' Christ to us 'will not speak on his own.'" (*Catechism*, 687).

As I read those words, “reveals,” “disposes,” and “welcomes,” I cannot help but think about women and how often we fulfill those roles in our daily lives. The Holy Spirit is necessary so that we can know the Father and the Son, so that we can have faith, and so that we can know truth.

This study will lead us to a deeper understanding of who the Holy Spirit is and how he acts in our lives, most especially through the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Where Can We Find the Holy Spirit?

In the Old Testament, we find the Spirit present right from the beginning of Scripture, as “a mighty wind sweeping over the waters” (Genesis 1:2) and later, in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve

"heard the sound of the LORD GOD walking about in the garden at the breezy time of the day" (Genesis 3:8).

Going further into Scripture, we find that the Spirit refers to strength and fortitude: "Send forth your spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the earth" (Psalm 104:30). In the book of Isaiah, "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD" (Isaiah 11:2). Those are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* lists seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (*Catechism,* 1831). These gifts are given to us in Baptism and strengthened in us when we receive the sacrament of Confirmation. We need these gifts because, as the *Catechism* says, "The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit" (*Catechism,* 1830).

What Are the Fruits of the Spirit?

In St. Paul's letter to the Galatians, he talks about the importance of living for Christ, of holding firm in the faith, and that through our freedom in Christ, we can live by the Spirit. In chapter 5:18–26, he offers a contrast between those who live according to the flesh and those who live according to the Spirit. Read those verses and then write down the fruits St. Paul lists.

Citing this passage from Galatians, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* lists these fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (*Catechism*, 736). The list we will use in this study is: joy (chapter 1), peace (chapter 2), patience (chapter 3), faithfulness (chapter 4), kindness and goodness (chapter 5), self-control and gentleness (chapter 6), and love (chapter 7).

We need these fruits to grow in holiness. Our lives are spent in the midst of an incredible amount of busyness, yet we often forget that the things we are devoting our time to are not always the most important things to focus on. Our focus, ideally, should be on becoming saints, which we do by working on getting into heaven. While that may seem like a very long-term goal (that's my hope anyway), it still can shape our daily life. Have we made sure to add heaven to our bucket lists?

In order to enter heaven and the presence of God, we need to be holy. Jesus reminds us, "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). This is not a demand for perfection but gentle call to strive for holiness in our lives.

Look at the list of fruits of the Holy Spirit that you noted. Stop and reflect a moment.

What fruits do you see in yourself? Which fruits do you need? How would having an abundance of the fruits of the Holy Spirit look in your daily life?

An Abundance of Fruit

Let's answer that last question very seriously and together. Read Galatians 6:7–9.

What will you reap if you sow for your flesh?

What will you reap if you sow for the Spirit?

Which do you want?

I cannot answer for you, though I hope you can say with me that you want eternal life!

We spend so much time in life working toward goals. We also spend time waiting for one thing to happen so we can move on to the next thing. Goals are important and waiting is necessary, but are we setting goals and waiting for the things of the Spirit or of the flesh? Often a goal starts out as good and positive, but then it turns into an obsession.

For example, I enjoy entertaining. Give me a house full of people to feed, flowers, candles, and music, and I am in my element. However, when I was first married, my desire to entertain was a burden. I worried about every detail, badgered my husband to make sure the house was spotless, and I was not very pleasant to be around while preparing for company. My husband finally told me that while he didn't mind entertaining, my stress level before people came over was not worth it. Something had to change. I wanted to exhibit joy and generosity and goodness but, instead, was demonstrating the opposite, mostly to my husband, who was just trying to help and make me happy. I eventually changed my ways, and now we entertain without stress, but it took effort and prayer on my part.

Purpose of This Study

Spiritual growth takes awareness, prayer, effort, and a guide. The guide that we have for this study is the Holy Spirit. The foremost goal of this study is to help us become more aware of the fruits of the Spirit, to learn how to grow in them, and to discover how we can access them more readily. However, each of us will learn for ourselves what we need at this particular time in our lives. We will read Scripture, pray, discuss, and find our way to an abundance of the fruits of the Holy Spirit!

Go back to the list of fruits you wrote on pages 4–5. Look over the list and prayerfully consider which you have, which you need, and which you want. Write each fruit here in the most appropriate category.

Have	Need

Closing Prayer

Father, we give you praise for all the gifts you have given us: our life, our family, our friends, and our talents and abilities. We thank you for sending your Son Jesus to save us by dying on a cross for us. Our salvation came through his passion and death; our faith in the resurrection holds us up and reminds us, always, of your love for us. Thank you, too, for the Holy Spirit, who guides us in our daily lives, who breathes love, peace, joy, patience, self-control, faithfulness, goodness, kindness, and gentleness into our souls. Help us to turn to you, always, for all of our whole life is important to you. Speak your words into our hearts and minds, Father, so that we might know you more fully and trust you completely. Amen.

1: Joy

INVITE THE HOLY SPIRIT

Opening Prayer

O Lord, fill me with your Holy Spirit. Infuse my soul with the joy of knowing you, loving you, and being your child. Slow me down. Help me pause. Give me eyes to notice all the joy in my life.

I desire to see the joy that permeates the world all around me, especially in the faces of the people I love and serve. Secure in me the hope that a life lived in joy pleases you, and take from me the things that prevent me from being joyful. I ask the Holy Spirit to fill my mind and heart with joy and to give me the courage to live out that joy in times of trouble.

Help my joy to come from you and not the fleeting things of the world. I want to share your joy with others. Let everyone I meet see the joy you have given me and be drawn closer to you. What you have for me is so much more than I can ever imagine, so I empty myself in order to be filled with all you have for me. Thank you!

Amen.

On My Heart

Cultivate Joy with the Holy Spirit

How great is our God and Father that he wants the absolute best for us, including joy! This fruit of the Spirit, the joy that Scripture speaks about and that we can see in many people, often seems to transcend the harsh realities of life.

In Psalm 1:1–2 we see the way to have joy: "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in company with scoffers. Rather the law of the LORD is his joy; and on his law he meditates day and night." Clearly, the

company we keep is either going to help or hinder us. And what else about ourselves might be preventing us from attaining that joy? What we think about needs to change.

Mother Teresa, now St. Teresa of Calcutta, is one person who comes to mind when I think of someone who has joy. If you searched for photos of her, you would see images of a woman filled with joy. It appears in her eyes, in the way she carried herself, and in the way she spoke.

Mother Teresa was a Catholic sister, now a saint, who served the poorest of the poor throughout the whole world. She founded the Missionaries of Charity, an order that now includes sisters, brothers, and priests as well as lay coworkers. She began her ministry in India, but her work and the order has spread all over the world to serve those in poverty.

I think that by her words "Joy is prayer; joy is strength: joy is love; joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls," St. Teresa of Calcutta gives us a starting point to understand what joy is and why we need it.[1] She knew where true joy comes from; it comes from God. Joy certainly encompasses more than happiness and contentment. Happiness is often based on what is happening at the moment, not on what is lasting.

With Whom Do We Associate With?

If we go back to Psalm 1:1–2, we are clearly told to not walk with the wicked, sinners, or scoffers. This is good advice overall; however, avoiding people who are not good company is probably easier than actually finding and cultivating relationships with people who will help us on our Christian walk.

Most of us have different groups with whom we associate. Oftentimes those groups are formed without our input, such as at work, at school, around activities for children, with our neighbors, and even with our family of origin. Some of these groups are constant, like our family, while others change depending on the season of our life. In some cases, we become friends with people from a group we find ourselves in. As adults, making new friends can be difficult. Sitting next to someone at a Little League game provides an opportunity to gain some insight into who that person is, but maybe not enough to decide if we want a true friendship with her.

I have been truly blessed with great friends in my life. Some have been a part of my life for so long that I need to stop and think when someone asks how long we've known each other. We have seen and supported each other through all types of joyful and difficult life events—births, marriages, new friendships, sicknesses, and deaths. All but a handful of my friends, I met in church. I should point out that I have worked in various parishes for over twenty years; spending a lot of time in church means you meet many, many people there! All of them have been given to me by God to love. We are not perfect; we have our struggles with jobs, children, husbands, aging parents, and health. Our common values draw us together, and we know that when we offer comfort or advice or opinion, it is given with our shared faith in mind. We keep each other focused on what is right, not on what is easy. We can offer a faith-filled perspective rather than the secular perspective of the popular culture. And, of course, we pray for each other.

Try, as much as possible, to associate with and surround yourself with people who share your values. All of your friends do not need to profess the same faith, but they should be people who strive to live a life that is in line with how you want to live your life. If you are unsure of where to start, maybe look around the table at the women with whom

you are sharing this study; there is probably at least one person who needs you in her life.

What Are We Thinking About?

Each day we make choices about what to wear, eat, read, watch, and activities to participate in, and often without much thought. If we want to live with joy, many of us need to make a conscious decision to do so. In order to learn to intentionally choose joy, it can help to find out what causes us to feel unhappy or unfulfilled.

Our focus here is to move from a worldly perspective to one where God is first. In my own life, I did not experience this growing up. The main place a lack of joy manifested itself in my life was in always worrying about what others were thinking about me and comparing myself to those same people. The thought of joy never entered my mind. I worried and compared and always fell short. Always, in all ways, I fell short. It was a terrible way to live. I continued like this for well beyond my teen and young adult years. Even after I had a family, a home, and a career, there was very little joy. I was constantly chasing the next accolade. My need to do better than the other person made me difficult to work with at times, but somehow I was able to advance in my profession.

By the time I was thirty, I thought I had it all together—a great job, adorable and smart children, a house, and a husband who did laundry. From the outside, I was living an enviable life, but inside I was miserable. My work involved travel and many nights away from home. One month I had to spend more time away than at home. One night, during my usual phone call to my family, my daughter was very chatty, and she let me know that her brother was feeling better after daddy took him to the doctor. My husband and son had decided not to mention

this to me so I wouldn't worry. I was upset that my son was sick, and I began to realize that I was missing too much. When I returned home, I started questioning the priorities in my life. After much prayer with God and talking with my husband, we decided that I would leave my job. It was not easy, but it was the right decision. I was able to find another good job in my field that kept me close to home. It was a major change but one that helped me to focus on my family in a way that had not been possible before.

This shift in priorities was necessary for my soul, my marriage, and my children, and it allowed me to have joy because I knew I was living the way God wanted me to live. My need to compare myself to others started to fade, and I was able to see my value as God's daughter rather than the sum of the things the world valued in me. While that was a major turning point in my life, I still had a long way to go.

What Causes a Lack of Joy

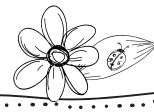
In addition to the worry that can consume us, a lack of joy can be tied to a lack of gratitude. When I speak of gratitude, I am talking about appreciating everything we have in our lives. From water to a roof over our heads to clothes to family and friends to our faith in Jesus, we have much to be grateful for on a regular basis. But are we? Is it possible that we forget to notice all the good in our lives? I often do. One reason for me is affluence. I work in a geographic area synonymous with affluence. And while my life is comfortable, I still have to do many mundane things like laundry and house cleaning and yard work. I often look over at the folks who do not, and I get a bit envious. It is funny that when I look at their Tesla, Audi, or Mercedes Benz, I'm not impressed at all. I'm envious of the time money can buy not the things money can buy, but that is still envy that steals my joy!

A habit that can cause a lack of joy is thinking that others' lives are better, easier, more interesting, or more fulfilling than ours. We live in a time in which looking at others through the lens of social media only highlights the great life all our friends are living, while we sit at home and fall asleep on the couch watching TV on Saturday night. Theodore Roosevelt said, "Comparison is the thief of joy," and I agree. When we live a life that is authentic and true to our values and goals, we don't need to compare. Instead, we can again return to gratitude. And remember, no matter how perfect a life may appear on social media, we all have struggles.

How to Obtain Joy

Many years ago my pastor gave a homily on joy. he used the word "joy" as an acronym for "Jesus, others, you," the idea being that we must put Jesus first, others next, and ourselves last. This makes sense. I know that when I spend too much thinking about my life, my plans, my problems, and whatever else is on my mind, I get bogged down in it all, and I feel overwhelmed and anxious—not very joyful at all. But when I turn the focus away from myself, turn to Jesus, and then take care of what he wants and needs me to take care of, life is better. It is not to say that I am unimportant, or that my needs are not worthy of my time and effort. Putting Jesus first helps put life and all of our efforts into perspective. It means that instead of asking God, "Are you okay with this?" asking "What's the plan?" and then following through with his plan.

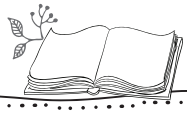
An Invitation to Ponder



I have mentioned a few things that can steal my joy if I allow them to move unchecked in my soul, such as feeling like I do not measure up,

envy, and comparison. I know they are interrelated and that sometimes one can lead to another. What steals your joy?

Connecting to Scripture



Take time to read each Scripture passage referenced below (and in each of the subsequent chapters), and pay special attention to what the Holy Spirit is calling your attention to in each verse. Do not concern yourself with right or wrong responses; simply relax and allow yourself to truly enjoy this time with the Word of God. Be assured, Jesus has no expectations for your time together; there is no perfect rubric for your time with Jesus, whether you are in prayer, reading Scriptures, or participating in the sacraments. The beauty of the *Stay*

Connected faith-sharing series[2] is that the time you spend with these books is your prayer time. Each of these journals is designed to be a guide for a personal encounter with the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

If you wish, read each verse a few times, asking the Holy Spirit to guide your heart and mind to receive what he has prepared just for you. Use the space provided under each Scripture verse to note any inspirations or thoughts that come to you as you read. Share your thoughts with a small group or maintain your notes as a personal reflection.

Prayer Before Reading Scripture

Father, fill me with the Holy Spirit to guide me as I read and reflect on your Word. I ask for the grace to allow your Word to flood my soul so that I may grow ever closer to you and your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Let us turn now to verses that will help us do as Psalm 1 instructs, to meditate on God's law and his Word and learn how God wants to give us joy.

Ecclesiastes 2:24–26 _____

_____

_____

Sirach 1:12 _____

_____

_____

- John 16:16–24 _____

_____

_____

- Philippians 2:17–18 _____

_____

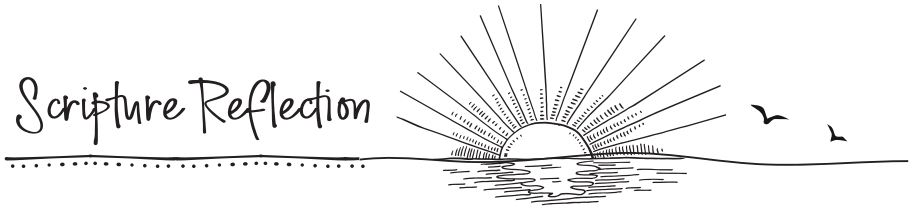
_____

- James 1:2–4 _____

_____

_____

Scripture Reflection



It can seem that joy, or being joyful, is hard to attain and sustain. Life is full of reasons to not be full of joy. God knows this and wants to help us. Psalm 94 asks when will the wicked people stop gaining glory and understand who God is? It then goes on to remind us that those who are guided by God are blessed, are given rest, and will not be forsaken; the Lord's mercy holds us up. My favorite verse is Psalm 94:19, "When cares increase within me, your comfort gives me joy." God is ready to comfort us; he wants to comfort us. Proverbs 12:25

says, “Worry weighs down the heart, but a kind word gives it joy.” There are many kind words from God that we have read that can give us joy. We can know these words by staying close to him as we saw in Ecclesiastes 2:24–26. Stay with God, especially in his Word, which is ours to read, to learn, and to pray over.

I fight against being negative on a regular basis. So, when I read those verses, I recall that my joy does not come from the world. It cannot be dependent on the day or the activity or the weather or a person. All of those things can change in an instant and can take away whatever I think was bringing me joy. True joy comes from being in tune with God.

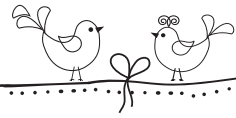
We can have joy because God has given us comfort, mercy, protection, and salvation. Consider Psalm 63:8: “You are indeed my savior, and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.” When life threatens to overwhelm us, run to the shadow of his wings and be loved. The knowledge of that love is what gives us joy. Sirach reminds us that fear of the Lord gives us joy. Fear of the Lord is not being afraid of God; rather, it is knowing that God is God, and you are not. It is remembering the natural order of things: we are the created, and not the Creator.

Jesus reminds us in John 16:16–24 that all of our trials, our grief, our mourning, and our weeping will turn to joy when he is with us. And while we are waiting for him to come again, he is with us now, most perfectly in the Eucharist but also in Scripture. James acknowledges our trials of life, but he tells us to consider them a “joy” through which we learn perseverance, which will lead to our perfection. Perfection here is not of the worldly sort, concerned with looks or status, but rather, it is the perfection we achieve when we are being the person God has called us to be for his glory.

Like most gifts we are given, the fruit of joy is not meant to be kept to oneself. St. Paul’s image of being poured out as a libation for others

is a beautiful one. I picture a huge earthen jug, overflowing, slightly tipped over, spilling out, and covering all those we meet. Just as a drink relieves our thirst, the joy of the Holy Spirit relieves our weary souls.

An Invitation to Share



1. Make a list of the things that bring you joy. Think about the things that give you a grateful heart, the things that help you remember that God has given you so much. Compare the things on this list to the things you often encounter throughout a typical day or week. Are you spending time doing those things that bring you joy? Are you spending time with people who bring you joy?

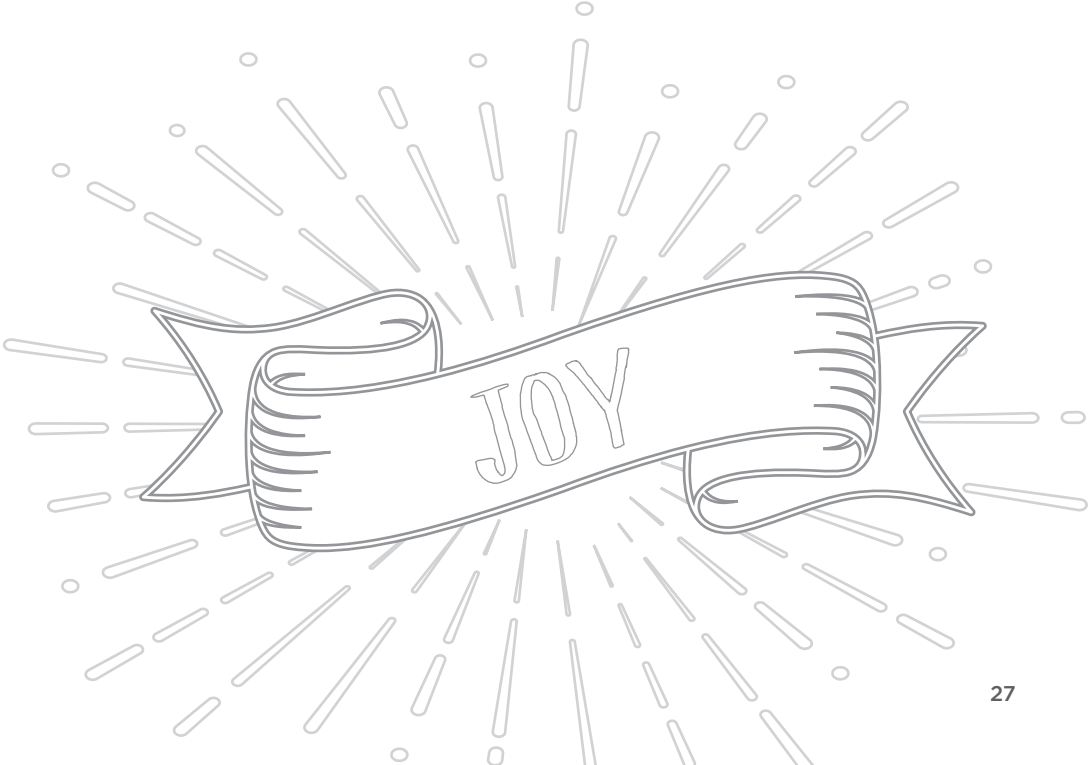
2. Start a gratitude list in your Bible, planner, or journal. This is for you, not for social media. For example, one Sunday afternoon I spent a few hours sitting in my family room with my husband, our children and their spouses, and our grandson. There was no big photo opportunity and no fabulous dinner; it was just us, and it was wonderful. What will you write on your gratitude list?

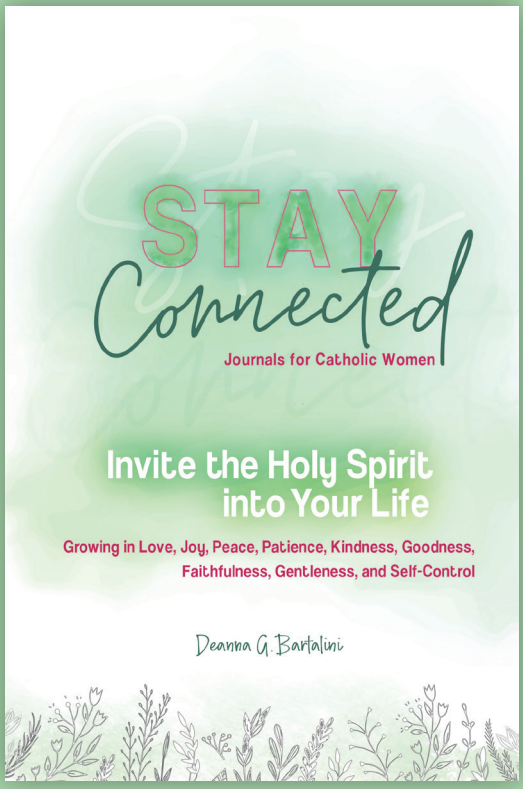
3. Which Scripture verse about joy can you claim as your own and try to live out more fully in your life?

Closing Prayer

Lord, you show me the way to joy with your words of comfort and truth. Joy is putting Jesus first, then serving and loving others, and then ourselves. Help me to remember this every day, especially on the days when life around me seems distressing and difficult. I am called to live a life full of the fruits of the Spirit so that I can be an example of you to others who do not yet know you.

My spirit of joy is a light. Guide me in sharing it with the people in my life. Help me to be grateful and to always remember that true joy comes from you. It is through knowing your Word that I discover my true purpose, and this leads me to joy; so, create in me a thirst for your Word, Father. I give you thanks and praise and glory for all you have given me. And I give you permission to continue moving me toward the joy that comes from being your child. Amen.





Order Now!

OSV