

Jesus' Emotional Life

Taken from the book of Fr. P. Ribes, s.j. "To be Like Jesus" published by the Gujarat Sahitya Prakash.

Intent of these notes

- ✓ *To know Jesus more.*
- ✓ *To imitate Him in controlling our feelings and emotions*
- ✓ *To accept our "humanity"*

PART ONE:

Feelings In Human Life

Many people in confession and elsewhere, speak in this way:

- I feel guilty for getting angry with my parents.
- I hate myself for feeling jealous.
- I am not a good person. I am very greedy.
- I am a lustful man. I have a dirty mind.
- I am uncharitable. I cannot forgive my enemies.
- I am lazy, etc.

What response would you give them?

You may find the right answers to the points mentioned above, by reflecting on some mistaken assumptions many entertain about human nature, such as:

- Human beings have to be rational, not emotional.
- We have to use our intellect and crush our emotions.
- Trust your mind; distrust your feelings.
- There are bad feelings and good feelings.
- We are to be blamed for our "bad" feelings.
- Holy people and of course, much less Jesus, never had "bad" feelings.
- We should feel ashamed – even guilty - of some degrading feelings like fear, lust jealousy, anger, hate, greed, sloth, pride, etc.

REFLECTIONS

Man's Nature

- Human beings operate at two levels, namely, at the **head level**: thoughts, ideas and knowledge; and at the **gut level**: passions, feelings, sentiments and emotions.
- They are like the two wings a bird needs to fly. When both wings are strong and well balanced, the bird will soar high. With one wing, however strong, a bird will never rise.
- In the same manner, both rationality and sentiments are essential and integral components of human nature.

- Human beings can be compared to a car. Emotions are the engine, the driving force. Reason is the guiding and controlling mechanism - the steering wheel and brakes.
- Emotions bring power, enthusiasm, joy, spontaneity, thrust, initiative, lubrication, love, and feeling: in word **humanity**.
- Reasoning gives balance, predictability, direction and meaning: in word **rationality**.
- Reason bereft of emotions would make us like robots and walking computers. We would be cold, lifeless calculating machines.
- We need the two wings, emotion and reason.
- Emotions alone without reason would make us wild runaway horses.
- Smart machines can be, manufactured.
- Feeling, loving, hating, caring machines can never be manufactured.
- What's best in the human person – **sentiments** - cannot be fabricated!
- To feel is normal. Feelings and emotions are essential constituents of our nature.
- Both thoughts and feelings in themselves are healthy and required.
- **Let us accept, nay even love our humanity, both thinking and feeling**
- Morally speaking both feelings and thoughts are neutral – they are neither moral nor immoral.
- It is only under the influence of our volition - our free will – that our thoughts and feelings turn morally good or bad according to the way – *our intentionality* - we handle them.
- Since feelings are human and part of our nature, to feel ashamed of them would tantamount to being ashamed of being human!
- Feelings make us unique, lovable, attractive, charming human persons.
- We have to accept our feelings, never deny or reject them.
- By rejecting them we would abdicate being human.
- We have to be aware of our feelings, not kill them, suppress or repress them.
- We should learn how to use them and express them in an acceptable way.
- Feelings and emotions should be taken seriously. However, they should be our servants, not our masters!
- Denial or fear of our feelings is the cause and source of self-alienation, scruples, neurosis and even psychosis!
- Since God is the author of human nature, to feel ashamed of our emotions would be an insult to God our Creator.
- Let us be grateful to God for making us emotional and full of feeling, hot-blooded, loving, sexy, angry, fearful, etc.
- The stronger and more powerful our emotions are - if controlled – the greater our human potential will be, and also the capacity to become great persons.
- Let us beg from God to give us the strength and wisdom to be fully human.

Conclusions:

- Let us never feel ashamed of our feelings; but thank God for them.
- Accept them with joy and gratitude; never deny them.

- Let us not feel guilty of having any sort of feelings. Feelings are not sinful in themselves. They are assets, not liabilities. They empower us.
- Yet, we should not surrender to them. We have to be their masters, not their slaves.

PART TWO

Feelings In The Life Of Jesus

Introduction

- Many Christians have an image of Jesus that is not human, a Jesus without feelings, passions and emotions, a sort of castrated Jesus.
- Jesus, being “a perfect man” had all that is humanly good in the highest degree.
- Jesus had feelings and passions, like you and me, even more than you and me.
- He felt sad and happy, loving and hateful, elated and depressed, attracted towards and repelled by people, angry and tender, grieved and consoled.
- He surely felt towards the members of the complementary sex as much as any normal and self-restrained human male does. He was a “normal” man, well balanced in the area of emotions and sexuality.
- Jesus being fully human had to experience the entire gamut of our feelings, emotions and passions, yet he always held them in full control.
- **Jesus – being fully human - assumed, accepted and sanctified all our human feelings, sentiments, emotions and passions.**

CONSEQUENTLY:

- **After the Incarnation, to be fully human is also to be fully divine because God, through Jesus, His Son, assumed and sanctified human nature.**
- Remember St Irenaeus’ saying: “The glory of God is a human person fully alive.”

The Emotional Life of Jesus

We suggest three options.
Choose any one of them or all of them.

Option No 1 Through Pictures or Posters of Jesus’ Life

For this, you need a good collection of dignified pictures of life of the Lord Jesus.

- In silence, reverently take one picture at a time and pray.
- Contemplate the picture and discover the feelings of Jesus, implicitly or explicitly, portrayed in it: anger, love, fear, hunger, sadness, grief, friendliness, etc.
- Reflect: What do you learn from Jesus' feelings?
- Then, examine yourself. How do you handle the same feelings in your life?
- Finally, pray to Jesus to make you more like him.

Option No. 2. Use the Passion Narrative of Luke (Lk 22/7 to 23/46)

- Slowly read the narrative of the Passion according to Luke.
- Any time an emotional state of Jesus is explicitly or implicitly mentioned in the text, namely fear, sadness, anger, etc., stop reading and reflect:
 - ✓ What do you learn from Jesus' feelings and emotions?
 - ✓ When you experience similar feelings how do you handle them?
 - ✓ How will you handle them in future?
- Pray that you may accept and handle your feelings as Jesus did.

Option No. 3 Browse over the four Gospels and find out passages where Jesus showed

Affection	Anger	Anxiety
Compassion	Depression	Disappointment
Dislike	Fear	Friendliness
Frustration	Grief	Hunger
Joy	Loneliness	Love
Pity	Sadness	Surprise
Sympathy	Tenderness	Thirst
Tiredness	Wonder	Any other emotion

Any time you discover in the Gospels an expression of an emotional state of Jesus:

- Stop reading and reflect:
 - ✓ What do you learn from Jesus' feelings and emotions?
 - ✓ When you experience similar feelings how do you handle them?
 - ✓ How will you handle them in future?
- Pray that you may accept and handle your feelings as Jesus did.

PART THREE

Personal Examination and Prayer

Go over the questions below and spend some time in prayerful reflection

1. How do I fare in my emotional life comparing to the to the emotional life of Jesus?
2. Did I, in the past, ever feel ashamed, afraid or guilty about my feelings, emotions and passions? Why?
3. What are the areas of my emotional life – if any - I repressed, ignored or despised? Why? What shall I do in future?
4. Which are the emotions and passions I find nearly impossible to control? What shall I do in the future?

Pray to God

- For light to know yourself and your emotions better.
- For courage to accept yourself and your feelings.
- For strength of will to control your feelings.
- To be “fully human” like Jesus.

APPENDIX

Human Emotions: A Blessing or a Curse???

Seven Capital Sins or Seven Capital Assets???

- When we speak of seven capital or deadly sins, we do not actually mean seven different sinful actions. We rather speak of seven fundamental **passions**, or seven strong drives nesting in our hearts which, if not controlled, will lead us to sinful actions. Passions are essential constitutes of our human nature. A human being without passions would be defective, sort of a dead person, a corpse.
- In the old catechism the seven Capital Sins or Deadly passions were given these names: **1 Pride, 2 Greed** (for wealth and power) **3 Lust, 4 Anger, 5 Gluttony, 6 Envy, 7 Sloth**
- In the modern Catechism of the Catholic Church (No.1773) we read: “In the passions, as movements of the sensitive appetite, there is neither moral good nor evil. But, only in as far as they engage reason and will, there is moral good or evil in them.
- Passions are very powerful forces. They empower us both to do good and to do evil. All depends on whether we master our passions or they master us. Passions in themselves are neutral (neither morally good nor evil).

- If we are led by our passions and use them against our reason and conscience, we would do sinful actions, namely, we would fall into the sins of **Pride, Greed** (for wealth, and power) **Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy and Sloth**.
- On the other hand, if we use our passions according to our reason and conscience, we would do virtuous actions, completely opposite to the sinful ones, namely, we would practise the virtues of **Humility, Generosity, Chastity, Meekness, Temperance, Brotherly Love and Diligence**.
- **Actually speaking, there are no bad feelings.** To feel angry, greedy, lustful, proud, slothful, envious or gluttonous is not a sin, It is to be human.
- Even Jesus, being a normal human person, had to handle his feelings.
In the Gospel we read that Jesus felt angry, hungry, loving, tired, frightened, etc. We are also told that the Devil in the desert tempted Jesus to gluttony, pride and greed. (Mt. 4/1-11) **Jesus, however, was always in control of his feelings. Jesus was always the master of his feelings, never their slave.**

Corollary One

- ***Jesus, being fully human had feelings and passions as we do.***
- ***Jesus, being holy, was always the Master not the slave of his feelings and passions.***

Corollary Two

- Passions can make us great saints or great sinners.
- They can make us like Jesus or unlike Him. All depends on the way we handle them.
- Interestingly, both great saints and great sinners have been deeply passionate people, ***Jesus being the most passionate of all.***

Corollary Three

- At confession, therefore, - as most people, mistakenly, do - we need not confess what we felt - angry, jealous, greedy, lustful, lazy, proud or gluttonous.
- Only, if mastered by our feelings, we acted them out in the wrong way, we should confess the wrong we did under their impulse.