Opening session by OL Leader (guest speaker or clergy) in main Zoom group:

20 minutes

**Opening Question:**

*(Leader should ask the group)*

How would you fill in this blank: “Joy is --------.”

Have campers answer this question on paper or a notebook.

**Teaching:**

The words “happy” and “joy” are sometimes used interchangeably. Happiness is caused by a moment of something good. Gratitude helps transform our hearts when we remember that God is present in our lives, even in the small things. This remembrance brings us joy. We may have a bad day or may be suffering or in pain, but joy is still possible. Happiness is a feeling of worldly pleasure that depends on good circumstances, but joy is eternal and can be experienced even in dark or difficult times. It is an abiding in God. This feeling cannot be taken away because it comes from God.

We have heard in the Gospel, “through the Cross, joy”. How can we say this or even believe this? The truth is, “you and I were created for joy, and if we miss it, we miss one of the reasons for our existence. In fact, the reason Jesus lived and died was to restore the joy we had lost” (Fr. Anthony Coniaris). We do not rejoice in death, but we rejoice in the fact that Jesus came to save us, and He did so through the Cross. Happiness is temporal and fleeting. Joy is eternal because it comes from God. Abiding in God brings us joy and that can never be shaken. We only experience pure joy when we walk in His ways. Even in tragedy, we are able to rejoice because we are answering the call to “rejoice with all who rejoice.” We are each searching for meaning in our lives, but what exactly are we searching for? We have God within us and should be seeking to draw nearer to Him each day. If we try to replace the immaterial with the material, we fall short. We find happiness, but it never lasts because it does not truly fill what we long for.

Joy is more than an emotion. It is a result of abiding in God.

**Activity:**

Write down one thing you are grateful for. Think of something very small and something you are grateful for right now, not in general.

**Teaching 2:**

It can be very hard to be joyful all the time. When we are upset about something, joy can feel like an impossible thing. It is helpful in those low times to remember God and to remember all of the blessings He has given us. When even that is hard to do, being around positive, joyful people can help lift us up. Joy is more than just a feeling. It is a way of being and something we live out in our relationships with our family, friends, and classmates.

We are joyful because we remember what God has promised us, through the death and resurrection of His Son, eternal life. Knowing this brings about joy. When we abide in God in this promise, it also brings about joy. We can share this joy with others through our actions. The way we interact and speak to people, joyfully and lovingly, can spread that joy.

**Wrap-up**

Provide the breakout questions to the entire group. Provide the instructions to the breakout activity.

*Note: Campers and Staff are moved from main Zoom room to their Breakout rooms*

**Discussion Questions** (for breakout groups):

Ask participants to write down their definition of happiness. Next, ask them to write down their definition of joy.

* Are these definitions the same or similar?
* What is the difference between joy and happiness?
* How can you explain this difference?
* Does God want you to be happy or joyful?
* Where are you seeking your joy?

**Devotional (Cabin Talk):**

Read the following:

This priest had been thrown into prison by Communists in the Soviet Era. His son died in jail, his daughter was sentenced to 20 years, his sons-in-law were also jailed, and his grandchildren had no food and had to eat garbage. Yet, in spite of this, the priest greeted everyone with the words, “Always rejoice!” “One day, he was asked, ‘Father, how can you always say rejoice—you who passed through such terrible tragedy?’ “He replied, ‘Rejoicing is very easy. If we fulfill at least one word from the Bible, it is written ‘rejoice with all those who rejoice!’ Now if one rejoices with all those who rejoice, he always has plenty of motivation for rejoicing. I sit in jail, and I rejoice that so many are free. I can’t go to church, but I rejoice with all those who can go to church. I can’t take Holy Communion, but I rejoice for all those who can. I can’t read the Bible or any other holy book, but I rejoice for those who do. I can’t see flowers, we never saw a tree or a flower during those years. We were under the earth, in a subterranean prison. We never saw the sun, the moon, the stars. Many times we forgot that these things existed. We never saw a color, only the gray walls of the cell and our gray uniforms. But we knew that such a world existed, a world with multi-colored butterflies and with rainbows, but I can rejoice for those who see the rainbows and who see the multi-colored butterflies. In prison, the smell was horrible… Others have the perfume of flowers around them, and girls wearing perfume. And others have pictures, and others have their families of children around them. I cannot see my children but others can. And he who can rejoice with all those who rejoice can always rejoice. I can always be glad.’” (p. 67-69) Fr. Anthony Coniaris tells the story of a 70-year-old Romanian Orthodox priest in his book Holy Joy: the Heartbeat of Faith (Light and Life Publishing, 2003).

* Where can we find examples of joy in the passage?
* What does this passage teach us about joy?
* What is the connection between sorrow and joy?
* What does Christian joy (from God) look like?
* Is it possible to “rejoice always”?
* How can we hold fast to joy, make it our mode of being?