

ABANDONMENT TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Fr Jean-Pierre de Caussade, SJ (1675 - 1751) wrote of this experience of letting oneself go entirely to God's grace in the book Abandonment to Divine Providence. <http://www.catholictreasury.info/books/abandon/index.php>

It came to my mind that the current concept of "binging" might be a comparison for understanding.

Metaphysically speaking pleasure is found in the body, happiness in the mind, and joy in the soul.

Binging is giving oneself over to something that either gives pleasure to the body, happiness to the mind, or deep joy in the soul.

Binge drinking has been reported among various groups such as college students, excessive consumption of alcohol for bodily pleasure and mental escape, until one can consume no more, that is until the next binge.

Binge eating of preferred foods such as sweets, chocolate, ice cream, chips, and so forth, until one is completely sated, until the next binge.

Binge watching of TV is one of my tendencies, particularly during time of March Madness for college basketball, the college football playoffs, and other sporting events. I will spend hours thinking about nothing else, totally consumed, abandoning myself to this intellectual happiness.

Some binge on physical activity such as sports for prolonged periods.

Others binge on work; we call them workaholics.

Sinful binges can be for drugs until we run out; for gambling until we can no longer get credit from the bookie; lustful abandonments in pornography or in dens of iniquity until we have to leave for work; gossip and incessant talking about everyone and everything; device addiction to the internet, tweets, facebook, other sites; shop til you drop.

Abandonment to God is binging in prayer, letting go to experience joy in the soul and to feel His love. This may not come naturally to human beings because of the intense pleasure of bodily delights or intellectual satisfaction.

When I was in priestly formation, one of my fellow seminarians was in the chapel almost every time I entered to pray. He had no props: no rosary, no bible, no breviary, no spiritual reading (he still prayed these at Mass and the divine office). He was simply on his knees for hours looking toward the tabernacle with a deep peace and satisfaction.

I was and am jealous to have that degree of abandonment to Divine Providence that this man has.

He went on to be ordained a diocesan priest, and he still has this gift of “binging on God”, abandonment to Divine Providence. One of his associate pastors said about him, “He needs to get out of the chapel and tend to his work as a pastor in the parish. If he wanted to be a monk, he should have gone into the monastery.”

It seems that binging on God, abandoning himself to the Lord, is so satisfying, that this priest returns to the Lord as often as he can. What a gift!

Prayer, work, and leisure all need to be incorporated for a balanced life. Charity toward others is part of both prayer and work. Some binge or abandon more to work, others to leisure, others to prayer. I believe the latter have “chosen the better portion and shall not be deprived of it.”

This priest’s unique prayer life is a gift to him from God. His prayer style, if you will, is one of contemplation which comes to him more easily than to me.

My personal prayer style has been termed mental prayer, a combination of reading, speaking to God, listening. Although not compared to the time that the priest I describe spends in prayer, I am able to binge and abandon for a while with litanies, bible reading, the divine office, the rosary, intercessory prayer in lists of people whom I lift up to God. I experience His presence, His love, joy. I am not satisfied without this daily experience

Others have a more meditative style. In a meditation, the technique is to put oneself in the place of those in a bible passage, for example, and to let go to the experience of God in the story of the characters in the passage. The rosary, meditation upon the mysteries of Jesus’ life, walking with Mary, would be another example.

Some engage in intellectual prayer, encountering God in deep study of scripture, tradition, finding joy with increased understanding of the person of God and how one relates to the Holy Trinity

As I grow older, I certainly no longer binge on work or projects. Now my fight is between leisure and prayer. I pray for the grace to abandon myself more to time with God rather than the leisure that I enjoy.

So far, I do not leave the house without an hour of prayer in the morning. Other prayers throughout the day help: rosary, the liturgy of the hours, Mass. Still I know that abandonment to divine Providence still escapes me, at least through my own efforts, impeded by my leisure interests.

Perhaps God will grant me one day the same contemplation of Him to excess as the priest I know has in his life. When all other sins, props, work, and leisure of this life pass away, then only God will be there for me.

The priest I know already experiences this in this life. With God's grace, I will also, getting a head start on heaven even before He calls me home.

— *Fr. Richard Perozich,*

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Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus