

‘Fear of Missing Out’ is Not a New Condition

Everyone has seen it happen. Suddenly, in the middle of a conversation at an event, a person feels compelled to answer an “urgent” message, frequently without bothering to offer any explanation. This compulsive behavior is triggered by the fear of missing out on some social interaction which the person judges as critical. Courtesy and good manners are sacrificed to the anxiety about the message, which, more often than not, turns out to be trivial. This anxiety has a name. It is called FoMO, which stands for “Fear of Missing Out.” It is a recognized psychological state in which people fear that others might be enjoying rewarding moments without them. They experience considerable nervousness when not continually connected. It further leads to compulsive checking for status updates, messages, and notifications regardless of time and place. Such a sad mental state is common in today’s society.

Desire to Be Connected 24/7

For those who missed out, the term FoMO was officially accepted into the Oxford English Dictionary in 2013. FoMO expresses well what might be called the frenetic intemperance of the times, in which everyone wants everything now, instantly and effortlessly. FoMO, however, takes this intemperance to an even greater intensity since its victims want not only their own intense experiences of the moment but also to be connected with those of others, everywhere, and simultaneously. It is no surprise that this leads to great frustration. No one can be connected to everything 24/7. It is unnatural. Everyone must sleep—even those who go to bed with their iPhones in their hands.

Failed Gods

However, this is the great delusion of FoMO sufferers. They

think they can be connected to everything, everywhere, and anytime. In short, they want to be demi-gods. Alas, it is the fate of all failed gods to suffer from FoMO because they seek to be what they cannot be. As a result, they develop depression, moodiness, resentments, and low self-esteem. They are consumed with envy seeing the experiences of others who seem to be happier. They try to escape the cold reality of their frustrations by further feeding their fantasies, or abusing alcohol or drugs.

Misplaced Expectations

FoMO leads to the creation of appetites for the sensational, the material, and the pleasurable. However, such appetites cannot satisfy man since he is both material and spiritual. Material goods are all restricted by the finite physical reality of Creation. Paradoxically, by obsessing about immediate material concerns, the FoMO addict rejects those profound and reflective activities of the soul that alone can profoundly satiate man's spiritual desires. And that is the tragedy of FoMO. For all their efforts not to miss out on the least thing, the FoMO addicts tragically miss out on the truly important ones.

Acedia and the Weariness for Spiritual Things

This intemperate condition matches what Saint Thomas Aquinas calls acedia. He defines it as the weariness for holy and spiritual things and a subsequent sadness of living. As a spiritual being, the man afflicted with acedia denies his spiritual appetites. "He does not want to be what God wants him to be," notes Josef Pieper, "and that means that he does not want to be what he really, and in the ultimate sense, is." The result is a state of listlessness, low spirits, and lack of joy. In the particular case of FoMO, people are so connected to the intensive feverish activity of modern life that indeed their real fear is not missing out but being separated from this state. They consciously choose to miss out

on the spiritual realities that will deprive them of their frenzy. By dismissing holy and spiritual things, they ultimately turn away from the God Who alone can satisfy their hearts and give them eternal life.

Conquering FoMO

Conquering the fear of missing out is simple. The object of one's desire must contain everything that satisfies the person entirely. As God revealed to Saint Catherine of Siena, material things will never completely satisfy man because they are less than him. Those who don't want to miss out must reorient their desires toward those spiritual goods found in the good, true, and beautiful. This pursuit will ultimately lead them to God, and when one has God, one has everything. One never misses out. As the great Saint Teresa taught: "Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. All things pass away, only God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing.

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This article was originally published on The Imaginative Conservative. Read the [full article](#).

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