

The Net Worker



HAPPENING UPON JOY

BY EILEEN HANRAHAN

Joy. What a simple word. Someone recently asked me to take ten minutes, find a quiet place, contemplate my life from childhood to the present, and write down the moments of joy I have experienced in my life. And so I did.

The funny thing is; I could have kept on writing for much more than 10 minutes. It filled me with joy to just think about all the joys in my life. Sure, there have been hardships too, but naming and listing my moments of joy made me aware of just how truly blessed I am. It was such a powerful exercise, that I asked some of my friends to do it as well. They all felt the same. I suggest you try it too!

As I looked at the list I created, I got to thinking about how many of those moments were just a natural part of living life, and how many of them were intentionally created? When my grandmother read to me, did she intentionally try to create a moment of joy? And how about the times in which I created moments of joy, were they just part of life, or were they intentionally created? I suppose that by planning a vacation for my family I am trying to create moments of joy for the bunch of us, but honestly, my "joy" list was filled with items that were just simple, ordinary moments in daily living, for instance, playing a game of cards with my father. Or, after buying our house, painting one of the rooms with my husband, Tom. I remember, as I was painting, trying to imagine the future. My head was filled with countless possibilities of what the future might hold. I remember being so happy, filled with joy. In reality, that moment was just a natural progression of life. Certainly a gift from

God, but not one I meant to happen, I just happened upon it.

So, after doing the "joy" exercise, for the next week, I tried to intentionally create moments of joy. For myself, and for those around me. For me, I took time to curl up with a good book. I started a puzzle with my family. I called some old friends. I appreciated the nature as I took walks. I tried to be more thoughtful to those I encountered. And guess what? It worked!

I was happier, and truly tried to "enjoy" those moments of joy! Whenever I had the opportunity to make a decision, I deliberately tried to pick the option that would be more joyful.



**JOY IS A GIFT
FROM GOD**

Can we feel joy more when we think more about it? What about if -- when every person we encounter -- we imagine the word "joy" on their forehead? Shouldn't we all be living this way, all the time?

I believe joy is a gift from God. It's a gift that needs to be appreciated, opened and used. God wants us all to be happy and joyful. When I happen upon a moment of joy, I try to pray to see Christ in it. When we happen upon moments of joy, we are connecting with the spirit inside of us. And we should intentionally live our lives trying to experience joy. It's such a simple word. Only three letters ...

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JUSTFAITH LOOKS AT IMMIGRATION

By Mary Bertani

Through the continuing JustFaith programs, about 20 parishioners are coming together monthly to study the hot button topic of immigration, its history and current issues, in light of Scripture and the church's social teachings. They've debated, read, role played, shared their own family immigration stories, and replaced misinformation with information. They've listened to undocumented workers, their children, advocates, and Bishop DaCunha of this archdiocese.

They have generously shared some their resulting thoughts and opinions here for our benefit:

Pat Kress: Immigration just never seemed a hot button issue for me. But this fall, we spent two evenings sharing our own immigration stories. The countries differed: Colombia, Ireland, Germany, Poland, Italy, China. The reasons differed: religious freedom, economics, hope for a better life for children, or just a dream. Our ancestors' decisions weren't always easy, their journeys often difficult, some not "legal," they weren't always welcome here but they stayed and made a life for themselves – and by extension for us. When I finished hearing the stories I vowed to listen to the issues that surround those who leave their homes today for many of the same reasons, and to find a way to treat them with the dignity we all deserve as human beings.

Joanne Mitchell George: I'm excited to be learning more about this issue. Over the years, I've heard many negative comments about people who enter the US illegally. But when I actually met some undocumented workers and asylum seekers in an inner city parish and heard their heart-wrenching stories, I felt such compassion for their struggles. When I heard Bishop DaCunha speak about the Catholic Church's efforts to help undocumented residents be treated with dignity, to help reunite families torn apart, and to help those who are already here, especially their children (some born here, others brought as youngsters), find a path toward eventual legal status and/or citizenship, I realized how much there is to learn and that we are called upon as

Christians to ask our legislators to support just measures to resolve the plight of these undocumented people.

Cris Olson: We toss the word "Immigrant" around; it rolls off our lips and becomes an inanimate object, a concept, a dollar sign. We cringe for our jobs, tighten our grip on our purse and our wallet. We brace ourselves for debate. And yet ... where did our families come from? Do you wish your ancestors had never made it here? Should someone have sent them back to where they came from? In spite of the influx of immigrants from many countries, some severely limited by harsh quotas, we became a nation strong and united, able to draw on and blend each other's cultures and perspectives. We became a nation admired: the "American dream." And yet... the dream has become unreachable for so many, especially for the children of the undocumented, who seek only to be allowed to complete their education and become part of the American workforce. It's been heartbreaking to listen to the stories of young people who love deeply the parents who brought them here, who have the will and ability to make a positive contribution to American society, being denied that dream.



Bob Bertani: I've come to a nonpolitical understanding of how dysfunctional and unfair our current federal immigration laws are.

Hearing the plight of the children of immigrants first hand pointed out to me the need for fair reform of the laws. This is not a case of "amnesty for illegals;" rather it's a case for acknowledging the sacrifice of everyday, bent over, hardworking people looking simply to improve the lives of their children, as which parent does not. When Congress takes up immigration reform again, I plan to watch, read, observe, ponder, and ultimately lobby as best as I can for what I perceive to be fair.

Mary Donohue: What happens when some 20 parishioners spend a month preparing for class with thought-provoking reading assignments followed by two or more hours of lively discussion dissection, and introspection? A fascinating metamorphosis – suddenly we find that we hear, see, listen, speak, and read with altered hearts and minds. And the beautiful hymn "Change Our Hearts" takes on new meaning. We've learned how blessed this country has been by the infusion of many cultures, yet ironically how resistant we are and have been to "the stranger among us." We've learned that the human race has been a history of migration. Beginning with Genesis and into our own time, people have always moved across countries and continents in search of better, safer, more peaceful lives for themselves and their families. No one leaves a homeland for a strange land easily. And yet migration is happening all over the world – and in our own

country as well. Optimist that I am, sustained by JustFaith studies, I believe that as a nation we will find ways to treat justly those who are already here – the hardworking, family oriented, and faith filled -and that as a nation we will benefit from their sacrifices, new ideas, and cultural richness. In my life's journey I've been blessed to be a student and a teacher and to have absorbed many interesting subjects. One of the most challenging and life-changing of these has been my three year commitment to JustFaith.

Mary Carter: Unless we are indigenous people, there are immigrants and very possibly illegal ones in our own family history. Each of them went through the heartbreak of leaving their homeland forever in search of a better life, of freedom – they found great hardships at first. Many of those coming here today are also forced to leave their countries because of religious and political persecution, some threatened with death if they remain. I keep thinking of the words on the Statue of Liberty – Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free – what's happening to that today? I'm learning a lot from the books we've been reading, but what most affects me is realizing that Jesus was forced to be part of a migrant family even in his mother's womb and that the family fled as refugees to avoid his being killed. He was born in a dirty, smelly stable – far from the support of family and friends. And later he lived in an oppressed country. How relevant is the story of the Holy Family to today!

CURL UP WITH A GOOD BOOK

BY ELEANOR GRYSOWSKI

Please spend some time in St. Peter's Parish Library. You will be amazed at the quality and variety of religious books you will find there.

Have you read any books by Rev. James Martin, a Jesuit priest in New York City? If you have, you know you not only receive spiritual insights but much good humor. We have 4 books by this author. Check him out! Have you read any books by Rev. Henri Nouwen? A distinguished Catholic writer whose books you will never forget. We have at least six books of his in our library.

Have you read "A Saint on Every Corner" by Albert Holtz OSB? It is written by a 30 year Benedictine monk on sabbatical. You will travel around the world with him, and as the flyleaf of the book says "bringing with him an artist's eye, a writer's flair and a monk's soul".

Have you read "A Friar's Joy" by Kevin Cronin OFM? Reflections by 15 members of modern day friaries in America. This is an inspirational book, but it is also quite funny.

Have you read any book by Joyce Rupp? She has a number of insightful books in our library. These are the kind of books you might want to give as gifts to good friends.

The library is open on Sundays after the 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Masses. Someone is always there at these times to assist you.

The library is open on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from after the 8 a.m. Mass to after the 11:30 a.m. Mass. There are instructions on how to take a book out by yourself.

POETRY CORNER

Continuing upon the subject of joy, Eileen Hanrahan came across this poem and sent it to me. I hope you enjoy it.

WELCOME MORNING

by Anne Sexton

There is joy in all:
in the hair I brush each morning,
in the Cannon towel, newly washed,
that I rub my body with each morning,
in the chapel of eggs I cook each morning,
in the outcry from the kettle
that heats my coffee each morning,
in the spoon and the chair
that cry "hello there, Anne" each morning,
in the godhead of the table
that I set my silver, plate,
cup upon each morning.

All this is God,
right there in my pea-green house
each morning
and I mean, though often forget,
to give thanks,
to faint down by the kitchen table
in a prayer of rejoicing
as the holy birds at the kitchen window
peck into their marriage of seeds.

So while I think of it,
let me paint a thank-you on my palm
for this God, this laughter of the morning,
lest it go unspoken.

The Joy that isn't shared,
I've heard, dies young.

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St Peter's Support Group

Will Celebrate 20 years!

BY MARY SABINO AND BOB SETZER

St. Peter's Support Group for Singles (formally known as the Support Group for Separated and Divorced) will celebrate their 20-year anniversary on Sunday, April 10th. We will begin the celebration by attending the 12:30 p.m. mass, followed by a gathering in the gym. This group has served over 1,200 people who have walked through the doors of St. Peter's.

Back in April of 1991, Mary Sabino saw an announcement in the bulletin placed by Father Anthony Lionelli asking if anyone was interested in starting a separated and divorced support group. She attended that meeting and has been there ever since. Father Tony was transferred a long time ago and Mary has continued to run the group along with Bob Setzer who joined her as co-director in 1998. The group began by holding meetings twice a month in the library. At the first meeting there were less than 10 people, but the group has grown over the years to approximately 30 people attending each week. Mary later decided that when you are going through the worst period of your life that you should have support every week and thus we have met every Thursday for the last 20 years.

This warm and caring group of sincere people supplies generous support and friendship to its members. The group provides companionship for members through meetings, service involvements and social activities. Not only do we cater to those who are separated and divorced but also to those who were widowed or never married. Through videos, speakers and topics related to self improvement and motivation we are able to reach a larger audience. The friendships that develop in the group have served to make us a close and caring unit.

There is no appointment necessary to come to our group. Meetings are held every Thursday at 7:30 p.m. in the School Library and only a \$1.00 donation is requested each week, a small price to pay for the support received. The meetings are over by 9:00 p.m., and some members of the group go to the River Edge Diner afterwards. Newcomers are always welcomed and are given a brief orientation and a chance to share their story with one of our facilitators. Our group is nondenominational and accepts members from all over New Jersey and nearby New York.

Our members have a wide variety of activities to choose from. We always have something going on, such as weekend trips, a major vacation trip each year, and nights out together. In the past we have visited Greece, Canada, cruised to Alaska, the National Parks of the Midwest, Cape Cod, and Vermont. Our upcoming plans include San Francisco, New Hampshire, and Cape May at Christmastime. Many parishioners have joined us on our trips, including couples and their families. We also give back to the community and parish by participating in food drives, homeless shelters, adopting a family at Christmas and other charitable works. Many of members have participated in parish activities such as Cornerstone and some have become new parishioners.

All of our members would like to express sincere appreciation to St. Peter's for allowing our group to flourish here.

Can you or someone you know benefit from this group?

**If so, contact either
Bob Setzer (201-712-9272) or Mary Sabino (201-261-8159)
or just show up any Thursday evening.**

We even have a website you can check out:

www.support-group-nj.com