

September 2005
Real Joy

Dear Theophilus,

I've had my fill of whiners! For the past several weeks the lectionary (a three year cycle of scripture readings) has been in the Book of Exodus with the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, complaining about anything and everything. So I switched my attention this Sunday to Paul's letter to the Philippians where the dominant theme is joy. That's more like it.

Paul talks of joy, Christians talk of joy, but joy is not the first word that describes our lives. It is one of those great truths and one of the great paradoxes. Joy is not found in the absence of struggle, but within it. You can't manufacture it. It is not found as much as it is given, a gift when you're not searching for it. It is waiting to surprise you when you're not looking.

Joy is helping someone else. This is hard work and seldom glamorous, but I have found the most joyous people are those who are doing something for someone else.

In the past month helping someone has taken on the face of a Katrina victim and we have several opportunities to help through the Presbyterian Church. Go to its website at www.pcusa.org, or call 800/872-3282 and use your credit card for US Hurricane Relief, Pastoral and Church Staff salaries (no one is left in many congregations to pay salaries) or Church damage.

A hands-on approach is available as well. LCPC is part of the Cleveland faith community's effort to help those Katrina victims who have moved to the Cleveland area. We have been paired with another church to provide help (furniture, household supplies, etc.) for a family as it moves into its own housing. Many of these people have come to Cleveland because relatives live here. Many plan to stay. Talk to Laurie Moormann or call the church office if you would like to help in this effort.

I experience joy when I see good things happening at LCPC, like Colleen Bloom and her work with our youth, our worship services in all their variety, Bonnie Oviatt and the music programs, the faithful people teaching our children, how we care for one another, how we care for our community and the world . . . and the list continues.

May joy be real to you this year!

Grace and peace,

Harry