



February 2015  
Volume 88 Number 2

## From the Clergy Associate for Family Ministries

### February Message

During the first few days of this New Year I have enjoyed a few items I wanted to share with you.

First, Krista Tippett's interview with Jesuit Priest Father James Martin in her series, *On Being* [<http://www.onbeing.org/program/james-martin-finding-god-in-all-things/7121#.VKrfxHk5DIU>]. The interview is just shy of an hour long, and well worth the time. I heard it with the lessons for the Second Sunday of Christmas in mind, and particularly the story of Herod sending the magi after Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12). While Herod responded to news of Jesus' birth from a place of fear, the magi responded from pure joy. Whereas Herod sought to destroy and eliminate what he feared, the magi rejoiced and practiced radical generosity in thanksgiving for their encounter with the presence of God.

On the topic of joy, Father Martin speaks of the difference between joy and happiness. Joy being the sort of happiness where God is the object. Father Martin describes a close friend's joy in the last days of his life. Martin comments that while his friend was not happy about dying of cancer, his living was still joyful.

As we approach Lent, it seems appropriate to examine both our experiences of joy and our own fears. Life is full of joy and sorrow, hopes and fears. Our task is to stay in conversation with God throughout, to respond motivated by joy and awareness of our abundance rather than scarcity or avoidance of what we fear, knowing that as we move through the inevitable dark moments, our sorrows will not have the last word.

This leads me to the second item I wish to share—a letter written by a favorite author, E.B. White, shared on Facebook<sup>1</sup>:

Dear Mr. Nadeau:

As long as there is one upright man, as long as there is one compassionate woman, the contagion may spread and the scene is not desolate. Hope is the thing that is left to us, in a bad time. I shall get up Sunday morning and wind the clock, as a contribution to order and steadfastness.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.brainpickings.org/2014/05/06/e-b-white-letters-of-note-book/>

Sailors have an expression about the weather: they say, the weather is a great bluffer. I guess the same is true of our human society—things can look dark, then a break shows in the clouds, and all is changed, sometimes rather suddenly. It is quite obvious that the human race has made a queer mess of life on this planet. But as a people we probably harbor seeds of goodness that have lain for a long time waiting to sprout when the conditions are right. Man's curiosity, his relentlessness, his inventiveness, his ingenuity have led him into deep trouble. We can only hope that these same traits will enable him to claw his way out.

Hang on to your hat. Hang on to your hope. And wind the clock, for tomorrow is another day.

Sincerely,  
E. B. White

With the world full of unpleasant news that can be discouraging to the spirit, his words are refreshing reminders that like the difference between joy and happiness, there is distinction between hope and optimism. And his letter reminds us of the power of the written word.

We all need camaraderie and encouragement. Written correspondence provides a vehicle for camaraderie. So does participation in small group ministry. In a recent Moms Group conversation, we discussed the reality that moms (who do not receive regular reviews or evaluations of our work), and not only moms, everyone, needs reminding from time to time that we are appreciated. In terms of the gospel lesson from January 11, although we may not all hear on a regular basis a voice from heaven reminding us that we are beloved, loving words of spiritual friendship go far in reminding us of the truth of our belovedness. And if we ourselves have had the opportunity for divine encounters and heavenly voices, what better time to consider these precious moments and what they summon in us.

As we engage these topics together, I look forward to speaking more with you. And I look forward to the continuing conversation.

Blessings and peace,  
Cathy Quinn  
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