

# From Humbug to Hallelujah

## FINDING JOY IN EVERYDAY LIFE

EVERY YEAR I WALK AROUND the annual Apple Festival in Long Grove, lured there by the quintessential charm of being part of a fall ritual that includes pumpkins, scarecrows, cider and most importantly, cinnamon and sugar-coated apple donuts. The air is fresh with wonder about what lies ahead and around every corner. I love the smell of those donuts, the feel of the cool, crisp air and the early dusk gently settling in. Children curiously inspect crafts and artwork, and I envy their play in the hay while looking for a gift. Joy appears when their heads pop out between the straw bales. It is spontaneous and infectious! Joy comes through watching their curiosity and imagination.



### What is joy?

That seems a curious thing to ask. Few things are as misunderstood as is the notion of joy. Of itself, that wouldn't be a serious concern, except that I know from my own experience, at times we are often left chasing the wrong things in life. We chase those things and often, add to our suffering.

Too often we confuse joy with good cheer or with a certain rallying of the spirit that we try to crank up when we go to a party, or let off steam on a Friday night. We tend to think of joy this way: There is ordinary time in our lives, when duty, work, emotional and financial burdens, tiredness, worries, and pressure of all kinds keep us from enjoying life and from being as cheery and pleasant as we would like. We think of ordinary times in our lives as keeping us from joy – the grind, the routine, the rat-race, the workweek – and so we look forward to special times, weekends, nights out, vacation times, social times, celebrations, and parties where we can break the routine, break out, enjoy ourselves, and experience joy.

### Filling the hole in our soul

Joy can never be induced, cranked up, or made to happen. It's something that has to find us precisely

within our ordinary, duty-bound, burdened, full-of-worry and pressured lives. This is joy: Becoming the art of possibility! Imagine walking to your car or to the bus after a day's work, tired, needing some rest. But, just as you reach your car or the bus stop, a sense of life and health in some spirit – filled full and all jumbled together lifts you up – you feel your body, mind, soul, gender, sexuality, history, place within a family, network of friends, city, and country, and this feeling makes you spontaneously exclaim: "God, it's good to be alive!" That's joy filling the hole in the soul!

### Finding joy

You can't find joy, it has to find you. That's its real quality. Joy is always the by-product of something else. As the various versions of the Prayer of Saint Francis put it, we can never attain joy, consolation, peace, forgiveness, love, and understanding by actively pursuing them. We attain them by giving them out. That's the great paradox at the center of breathing. We breathe in, and breathe out. We receive and take. In a way, we share what God has given us. Jesus used the Hebrew word, *ruah*,

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which means breath or spirit. The air that we breathe out is the air we will eventually breathe back in. Joy will come to us if we set about actively trying to create it for others. If I go about my life demanding, however unconsciously, that others carry me rather than seeking to carry them; feeding off of others rather than trying to feed them; creating disorder rather than being a principle of peace; demanding to be admired rather than admiring; and demanding that others meet

CONTINUED ON 39 →

my needs rather than trying to meet theirs, joy will never find me, no matter how hard I party or try to crank up good cheer. I'm breathing the wrong air into the universe. You were not afraid when spring became summer, summer became fall, and fall is now becoming winter. Hallelujahs will soon be heard replacing humbugs. Souls will be filled with hope and curiosity. Imagination will fill the cool fall air.

The art of possibility is the center of this magazine, and here in this column as well. May you live into hope that turns darkness into light, rain into snow, and pain and suffering into hope and joy-filled living.

Yep, even weight loss and suffering come to my mind on my visit to the Apple Festival. Pass me that second sugar apple donut. And the joy of the moment arrives as the sugar passes over my lips! U

*The Rev. Jim Swarthout has served in the Chicago and McHenry areas as a priest for more than 25 years. He serves part-time at Saint Mark's Episcopal Church. Rev. Swarthout is a board member of the Mental Health Board of McHenry County, Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital Medical Ethics and Connections Communications in Barrington, and the Dawnbreakers Rotary Club in Crystal Lake. For his work within Rotary, he received the Paul Harris Fellow Recognition. Rev. Swarthout developed two faith-based preschools, one in Deerfield and another in McHenry. He is nationally known for founding the Saint Paul Diaper Bank Partnership, for which he was named to the founding board of the National Diaper Bank Network. Rev. Swarthout was recently named executive director of the Samaritan Counseling Center of the Northwest Suburbs in Barrington. The Samaritan Center is a not-for-profit organization that provides pastoral counseling for people of all economic groups and religious beliefs. He and his wife, Claudia, live in Barrington Hills.*

# November Events

in honor of  
**The Greatest Generation and Veterans Day**



reception. **Tuesday, November 8, 4-5 p.m.**

## "MARCH ON: VETERANS' STORIES OF LIFE, LOVE, HONOR AND DUTY"

A photographic narrative told in the voices of those who served on display in The Gallery at The Garlands throughout the month of November, Monday-Friday, 9am-4pm. Meet the artists and the Veterans at an opening



## AMERICAN CHRONICLES FROM 1945



Step back in time and revisit the fashion firsts, news of the day and popular music, with a dramatic presentation by Historian Elaine Rothenbaum. **Wednesday, November 9, 1-2 p.m.**

## VETERANS' BENEFITS

Access tax-free pension benefits that help offset the cost of assisted living or care for a spouse. Learn more from Thomas Pizur, author and "The Veteran's Friend." **Thursday, November 10, 1-2 p.m.**

## ALL-AMERICAN LUNCHEON AND OVERVIEW OF THE GARLANDS



...featuring tours of The Garlands homes and amenities, an all-American buffet and the opportunity to meet and talk with current Garlands Members about their choice to move to The Garlands. **Friday, November 11, 11:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m. followed by optional Veterans Day concert.**

## VETERANS DAY CONCERT

Reminisce with popular patriotic tunes, comedy and impersonations featuring Bob Marcy. **Friday, November 11, 2-3 p.m.**



THE GARLANDS  
—of Barrington—

*All programs are free and open to the public with reservations.*



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