

Supply of Joy

My dictionary defines "joy" as follows:

The experience of delight or happiness caused by something good.

Many might agree that "joy" is a bit in short supply this year. It's like going shopping for paper towels and *Clorox Wipes* and finding empty shelves.

For all sorts of reasons, "joy" seems harder to find, more difficult to share. Lots of people even feel like they've run out...

On *Gaudete (Rejoice!) Sunday*, Isaiah announces that *we* have been anointed to bring glad tidings, to heal those with broken hearts. And Saint Paul commands us to "rejoice always" and to never tire of giving thanks.

How do we even begin to do that during this daunting December of 2020?

Last week I sat with a family that lost their dad to Covid-19. As we attempted to gather, albeit socially distanced, we made it a point to *focus and remember*.

Wiping away tears, Joan remembered her dad as her #1 fan, always cheering her on, even when she wasn't picked for varsity basketball. Jim talked about a man who always seemed "to find the time" to listen to what was going on in his son's life. Carla recalled how, after her divorce, dad showed up to her house every Saturday: "*How can I help*

you, today?" Bill reminded us how *What would Jesus do?* was his father's favorite motto in life.

As our time together drew to a close we all realized we felt "different." Something had changed. Despite everything we had lost, we knew we had been given so much. The "so much" put us in a different space: More serene, more grateful, more content... despite our pain. It is as if something had been "lifted." Was it our hearts?

I couldn't help but think back to those words: Joy = *the experience of happiness caused by something good.*

Each of us has experienced this in our own way: a bittersweet delight that infuses the spirit, even when we are overwhelmed.

Mark Twain once wrote, *"To get the full measure of joy, you must have someone to divide it with."*

We're certainly going to have to be innovative and creative in sharing and dividing it this year. We may have to focus, remember, and connect in new and different ways.

But joy is healing to the soul. No one is to be deprived of its comfort...even in these times.

Pray for the grace to be open to the gift.

Avoid shopping for cheap imitations.

Fr. Steven Labaire