

# Joys, sorrows can teach us to savor life

I hope that you are enjoying the Easter season and its invitation to savor the gift of redeemed life we share in the Risen Christ. That invitation directs us not to a reality above and beyond us; rather, it calls us to be aware that — through the power of the Holy Spirit — the Lord lives within us and among us.

Yes, I know that the reality of God's faithful and intimate presence can stagger the imagination. Yes, I know that it can seem maddeningly elusive, especially when life becomes hectic; innocent people suffer; tragedy touches our lives; when others interfere with our careful plans or we manage to mess things up all by ourselves.

When we are on a roll, faith can seem so easy. At such times we normally enjoy a confident sense of God's care, and prayer seems to come easier.

I know that I tend to be more grateful. I notice, too, that concern for others and a generous disposition toward them seem to come more naturally.

Let me give you an example. Many who were baptized or came into full communion with our church at the Easter Vigil in parishes all over our diocese came to Sacred Heart Cathedral for the Eucharistic Liturgy on Saturday evening.

It was a great joy for all of us to welcome them to our cathedral church and to share Easter prayer with them. Their enthusiasm and excitement about their spiritual journey, their eagerness to know more about Jesus and to participate in the life and mis-

## along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

sion of the church gave all of us great encouragement. Their joy is contagious.

I am quite sure that they do not realize just how great a gift they are to all of us. I know they are a great inspiration to me and remind me never to take for granted the precious gifts of life and grace God has given to us.

It can be a different story when things do not go well. I know that I can all too easily feel abandoned by God, find prayer difficult and move from a generally giving, expansive disposition toward life to one that is defensive and fearful.

When I notice that disposition beginning to take root in me, I really do try to deal with it as honestly and as directly as I can.

Among my efforts at such times are to remain faithful to prayer and to seek the guidance and support of good friends. Those two steps always help.

What helps most, however, is a deliberate effort to remind myself of people I know who carry burdens much heavier than I have ever been asked to bear — and who do

so with unbelievable faith and courage.

I meet such people fairly often. Sometimes I know their stories only through correspondence. They experience suffering, sometimes of staggering depth and intensity. Yet, even in the midst of pain, they stay rooted in their faith in our faithful and loving God.

I spoke with one person this week and had a letter from another who told me about heartbreaking losses they had experienced. Both were free and honest enough to say that they were angry at God and were struggling to remain faithful in circumstances that would test the spirit of the strongest of individuals.

Both admitted that the intensity of their feeling had left them with feelings of guilt. Yet, even in their telling of them, their faith shone through their stories in ways I hope they will one day be able to appreciate.

Those new members of our faith community and the two individuals coping with tragic loss have been wonderful gifts to me during this Easter season.

They have taught me much about how faithful people move through the dying and rising that are a part of every life.

They inspired me to savor the life that is ours, encourage me to keep the ups and downs of life in proper perspective, and remind me that the God who loves us all is with us every step of the way.

I hope that your Easter experience also has been touched by such individuals. Peace to all.

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