

PARENTING

Look for the joy in Easter season

Last fall my husband's grandmother died at the age of 86. When my husband, Joe, was a toddler, he couldn't pronounce, "Grandma Marie," so his beloved grandmother was forever dubbed, "GiGi." Our children, Bobby and Teresa, had the wonderful opportunity to get to know and love their great-grandmother. On the morning of GiGi's death, Joe told the kids he had some "very sad news, but also some happy news" that he wanted to share with them.

Joe said to Bobby and Teresa: "GiGi died this morning and I'm very sad because I loved her and I'm going to miss her so much. But now she's in heaven and all her suffering is over because she is with God." After a few moments of silence, Teresa said, "And what's the happy news?"

During this Easter season we are all invited to celebrate the good news of Jesus' resurrection. Through Jesus' triumph over death, each one of us who believes is promised the gift of eternal life. Easter is a feast of joy that can stay with us forever. I'm always relieved when the 40 days of Lent have passed and the Easter season begins. It's difficult to attend Mass during Lent because there's a heaviness and gloominess that permeates the church. The colors of Lent are a mournful purple. There's no procession, no alleluia. The music is particularly glum. One Sunday morning dur-



family matters

By ELLEN MARX

ing Lent, my friend Lisa remarked, "I love listening to our choir, but during Lent the music is really starting to get to me. Each week it's like we're getting ready to board the Titanic."

Just as it seems that all joy has faded from the celebration of the Mass, Easter arrives in the nick of time. We're able to experience a greater joy on Easter because we've gone through the sorrow of our Lord's Passion. In our own lives, we often feel joy on a much deeper level after we've been through heartache, adversity and suffering. Our challenge is to bring the joy of knowing and loving God into our hearts and the hearts of others, even as the crosses and cruelties of life come our way.

On most days, the gifts of joy and laughter fill our world so completely that we often take them for granted rather than see-

ing them as one of our greatest blessings. A baby's smile, a child's laugh, a case of the giggles, or the roar of laughter can easily turn a dark mood into a playful one.

My good friend, Dr. Barron Maberry, pastor of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in southwest Washington, D.C., has been conducting workshops on the healing power of laughter and humor for more than 15 years. His most popular workshop, "Take Two Laughs and Call Me in the Morning," addresses humor as a positive spirit for us emotionally, physically and spiritually.

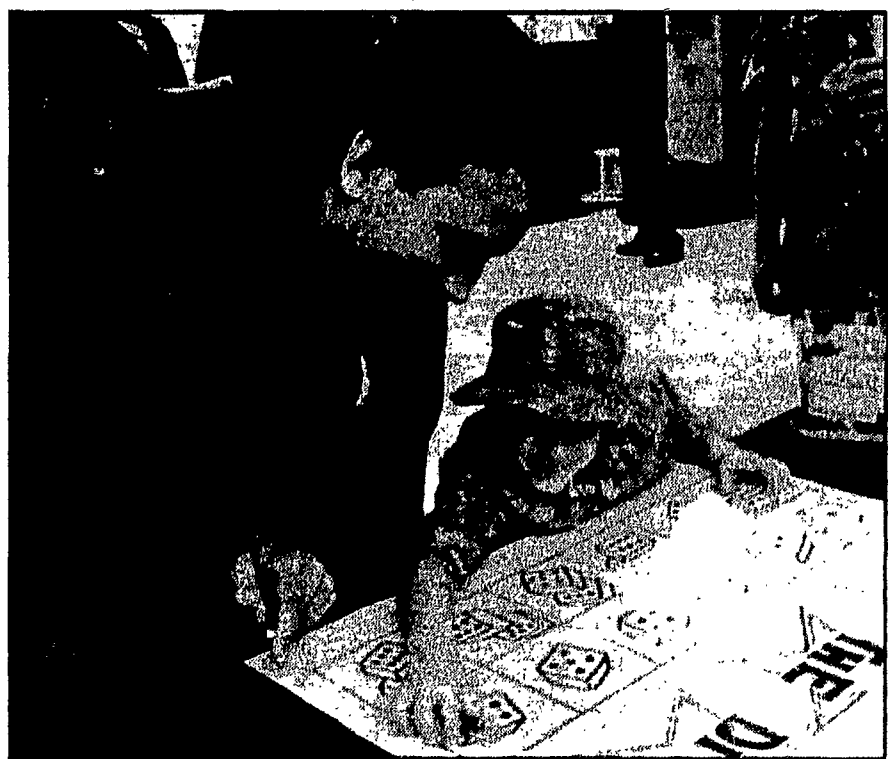
Dr. Maberry said that there are benefits to spreading laughter and having a positive spirit: they stimulate our thinking; create a positive mental and emotional state; produce endorphins to combat depression and anxiety; recapture the gift of play and help us to live healthier and longer.

There are times when we all tend to take our religion too seriously. We forget that the words "joy," "rejoice" and "happiness" fill the Old and New Testaments. After the birth of Jesus, the angels declared to the shepherds: "I come to proclaim good news to you — tidings of great joy to be shared by the whole people." Jesus worked his first miracle during the joyous occasion of a wedding. Jesus' parables were uplifting stories of the joy of forgiveness and of loving God. His miracles of healing brought hope and happiness to broken and desperate people. His Sermon on the Mount offers a clear teaching on how we will find true happiness and joy. During a prayer for the disciples on the night before he died, Jesus said, "So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you."

Sometimes we leave the joy out of our religion because we weren't raised to see Jesus as a man who smiled, laughed or enjoyed his disciples' jokes. Why is it so hard to imagine a joyful Jesus who laughed easily? After all, Jesus was a passionate man full of all our human emotions, including joy. I find it difficult to believe that vast crowds of people would have followed Jesus if he was humorless and somber. And children certainly wouldn't have run into the arms of a man who didn't have a ready smile and a cheerful heart.

Because we are made in the image and likeness of God, we know our God is a God of laughter as well as love. He longs for us to be joyful even in our sorrows and difficulties. The Holy Father has said, "In a true sense, joy is the keynote of the Christian message. We are an Easter people and 'Alleluia' is our song. Rejoice because Jesus has come into the world! Rejoice because Jesus has died upon the cross! Rejoice because he rose from the dead! Rejoice because in baptism he washed away our sins! Rejoice because Jesus has come to set us free! And rejoice because he is the Master of our life!" And that indeed, is the happy news!

Marx lives in Lawrenceville, N.J., with her husband and two children.



Greg Benenati/Photo Intern

Picking a winner

Bill Anderson helps his son Alex decide where to place his ticket in a dice game during Parent Night, April 9, at McQuaid Jesuit High School. Alex's prize for winning was some candy. The annual fundraiser for the high school offered games and food for children as well as a silent auction for the adults.

Events

● **THU, APRIL 29 — Peepers:** classes, walks, games, crafts, stories; 1-3 p.m.; Genesee Country Nature Center, 1410 Flint Hill Rd. Mumfords; \$10 per class, \$55 for entire program; call 716/538-6822.

● **FRI, APRIL 30 — Arbor Day:** nature celebration; 10:30 a.m.; Visitor Center, Letchworth State Park, Castile; free; for information call 716/493-3625.

● **FRI, APRIL 30 — Concert:** Syracuse Children's Chorus; 7:30 p.m.; Delevan Theater, New York Chiropractic College, Seneca Falls; \$8 adults, \$6 seniors, \$3 for students, children 12 and under with an adult, free; reception with performers follows; call 315/368-3081.

● **SAT, MAY 1 — Blossom festival:** Hansen Nature Complex, Town of Henrietta; free; for information call 716/359-7042.

● **SAT, MAY 1 — Baby and kid's fair:** crafts, magicians, face painting, contests, the Dinner Dogs, Just Clowning Around, Rochester Children's Theatre; 10 a.m.-3 p.m.; The Dome Center, 2695 E. Henrietta Rd., Henrietta; free.

● **SAT, MAY 1 — Science Saturdays:** Introduction to model rockets; 1 and 2:15 p.m.; Rochester Museum & Science Center, 657 East Ave., Rochester; free with museum admission; 716/271-4552, ext. 342.

● **SAT, MAY 1 — Mothers' Day projects:** make herbal gifts; 10 a.m.-noon; Rochester Civic Garden Center, 5 Castle Park, Highland Park; for ages 5 and older; \$10 (\$6 for members); call 716/292-5900.

● **MAY 1-2 — Camp-in:** with the Atoms Family; games, crafts, live science demonstration, snacks and breakfast; 6 p.m.-8 a.m.; for families with children 8 and older; \$30 per person, \$25 for RMSC members; Rochester Museum and Science Center, 657 East Ave., Rochester; 716/271-4552, ext. 342.

● **MAY 1, 2, 8 — "The Jungle Book":** Rochester Children's Theatre, School of the Arts, 45 Prince St., Rochester; for information, call 716/271-7870.

● **MAY 4 — Tuesdays for Tots:** The Hill Brothers; 10 a.m.; members, \$3 adults, \$2 children, nonmember, \$6 adults, \$4 children; Strong Museum, One Manhattan Sq., Rochester.

● **WED, MAY 12 — Wednesdays for Tots:** "Three Little Pigs"; The Lyons Puppets; 11 a.m.; members, \$3 adults, \$2 children, nonmember, \$6 adults, \$4 children; Strong Museum, One Manhattan Sq., Rochester.

COURIER CLASSIFIEDS

GENERAL

Miscellaneous

WILL CLEAN: out and haul away items from houses, attics, basements, garages, etc. Free estimates. Rent 16 foot van and driver for hauling, deliveries, etc. \$30/hr. Call 716-254-2502

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Sell subscriptions to Diocesan newspaper. Hourly rate plus commission. Part-time afternoons/evenings. For appointment call Donna at 716/328-4340.

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Professional cook will plan, shop, prepare, deliver home-cooked meals seasoned with good nutrition. References. Gates Chili or Webster Areas. 716-426-0116

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Send check or money order to: F.C.P. P.O. Box 18495 Rochester, N.Y. 14618

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