

## REJOICING IN THE SEASON OF EASTER, 2023: APRIL 9

In Matthew's resurrection narrative, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary are engaged by Jesus with a word that can be translated "Greetings", "Peace Be With You", or as one commentator points out, "Rejoice". Rejoice can be defined as "to give joy to, to gladden", and "to feel or show great joy or delight".

During this Easter Season—a Season of 50 days lasting from the day of Easter to Pentecost (a word meaning "fifty")—I'm inviting you to reflect with me on what brings you joy—even great joy—and delight. Each day will invite you to reflect on a different subject, one that hopefully resonates with you in some way.

The subject is rejoicing. Jesus rejoiced in encountering these two women who had become his friends in the wake of his resurrection. He had last experienced them on Thursday and Friday as they stood as witnesses to what was occurring, not flinching or abandoning Jesus along the Way. Is there any reason to wonder why Jesus shared this word of gladness with them?

What causes you to rejoice? With whom would an encounter cause you to exclaim "rejoice"? I invite you to reflect with me on rejoicing...

## REJOICING IN THE SEASON OF EASTER, 2023: APRIL 10

### PEANUT BUTTER SANDWICH

Recently I rejoiced in a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. You may know it as a jelly and peanut butter sandwich or as peanut butter and jam of some kind. Either way, it is a classic. I rediscovered this experience of rejoicing because I didn't have anything else to make a sandwich with and I was hungry!

It's simple and also profound, this combination of brown peanut butter and a jelly/jam whose color reflects the grapes of the treat, spread on bread. Three ingredients: bread, peanut butter, and jelly/jam; and one tool, a knife to spread the goods on the bread.

The recipe can be amended. My Mom used to spread butter under the jelly/jam on the sandwiches she made for her six kids to take to school for lunch so the jelly/jam did not bleed through the bread. Later I would marry a woman who does the very same thing! I do not like butter under my jelly/jam. Let it bleed through. I'll enjoy it anyway. Everyway!

Do you like peanut butter and jelly/jam sandwiches (I know a person who has never ever eaten one!). What is a sandwich you rejoice in, that satisfies your hunger and why?

REJOICING IN THE SEASON OF EASTER, 2023: APRIL 11  
PERSONS NAMED JOY

Persons I have encountered in life named Joy are people who embody rejoicing. How does that work, since they didn't name themselves? What is the motivation for a Joy? One of my grandmothers was so fond of movie stars she named each of her five children after one, including number four of five: Wayne. He did not naturally rejoice. Until he met Joy.

Joy embodied the definitions of "to give joy to", "to gladden", "to show great delight", in each and every way. And Joy did bring joy to the life of my uncle and to others, despite how her life was not all cupcakes and rainbows.

Injuries from an auto accident had left Joy without the ability to bear children. Still desiring to be a mother, she found herself rejoicing in motherhood when she and Wayne adopted two boys with challenging birth stories into their lives. The delight (both physical and metaphorical) that Joy brought to life was cut short by a too early death, a way too early death. Despite that, it is still a joy to rejoice in remembering Joy.

Do you know a Joy? What person in your life causes you to rejoice?

REJOICING IN THE SEASON OF EASTER, 2023: APRIL 12  
ENJOYMENT

The common definitions of this word puzzle me, because none of them contain the word "joy" which is right there in the middle of the word: en-joy-ment! It can be defined as "the state or process of taking pleasure in something" and "a feeling of happiness or pleasure". For me, happiness and joy are different, with joy describing a deeper experience.

En-joy-ment. What brings you enjoyment? In what do you find yourself desiring to rejoice, to delight in? What do you receive enjoyment from? How do you offer enjoyment to others? What does not bring you enjoyment? How do you know when you are experiencing enjoyment?

Another way to wrap words around defining this word would be to suggest that enjoyment is the ability to "enjoy the moment", the moment when someone or something has captured our imagination, our interest, our gaze, ourselves (another interesting word) in such a way that we are captivated. What is a moment today, and if not today yesterday or even last week, in which you found yourself in the midst of enjoying something, in the midst of joy, of en-joy-ment?

In what ways do you make and take the time to embody en-joy-ment?

## REJOICING IN THE SEASON OF EASTER, 2023: APRIL 13

### MOONLIGHT

Do you rejoice when experiencing moonlight? Does it make a difference for you whether the moon is at a certain stage? I once heard a poet refer to a crescent Moon as "a fingernail clipping of the moon" and found it marvelously expressive. Do you have any extraordinary experiences regarding Moonlight? Have you found yourself out at night, away from the lights of a community, bathing in the Moonlight? If not, where would you like to go to do so?

The Moon's light derives from reflecting the light of the Sun, acting like a mirror. And the moon always shows the same side to Earth, the backside of the moon wrapped in darkness, or so we're told. Perhaps it reflects the light of other stars in a way we cannot see.

In the home where I live, when the sky is clear of clouds, the Moon in its nightly path across the sky casts its light through the west-facing windows into rooms in the house, It is marvelous as well as mysterious, to be bathed in the soft strong light in the primary bedroom very early in such mornings.

How are you, like the Moon, a reflector of light?

## REJOICING IN THE SEASON OF EASTER, 2023: APRIL 14

### A CLEAR, CLOUDLESS SKY

In the upper Midwest there are many things that are rare, but nothing is more rare than a clear cloudless sky, given how each of the Great Lakes surrounding each state generates moisture that become clouds, which beget more moisture. From Minnesota to New York and everywhere in between, those marvelous bodies of water known as the Great Lakes frequently act as their own weather makers. Often a clear sky is found at night, a star-watchers paradise and a thermometer dropping condition, no matter what the season.

Having lived in North Carolina, a cloudless sky during the day does in fact reflect Carolina Blue. Santa Barbara, California averages well over 300 days of sunshine each and every year, and to put an exclamation point on it, is a community that faces south, allowing it to soak up the sun's rays all day long. Talk about paradise!

What is your preference: clouds or no clouds? What do you find attractive (or not) about a cloudless sky? Does the "blank canvas" of a clear sky draw you in or do you find it distorting? What do you rejoice in when it comes to the makeup of the sky?

REJOICING IN THE SEASON OF EASTER, 2023: APRIL 15  
GREATER LIGHT AND LESSER LIGHT

Genesis (of the Bible, not the automobile) records that in creating order out of chaos, God commanded light to appear, separating day from night. Along the way, the light was consolidated: the greater light (Sun) and lesser light (Moon) along with the stars. We take this all for granted, the presence and presents of natural light, augmented by the various forms of human-generated light.

We learned early on in school that not only are these lights necessary for us to make our way (remember sailors navigating by the stars), but they are also absolutely essential to the growth of every living thing in the case of the Sun and influential in the matter of tides in the case of the Moon.

Light exists not only around us, but also, metaphorically, within us. Has anyone ever rejoiced in the "light" that is found within you, or have you rejoiced in the "light" found within another? How have you come to understand the "light" within you to be "greater" or "lesser" depending upon the situation, while acknowledging that both are necessary and needed?

In what way do you rejoice in your "light"? In the "light" of another?