

The Healing Power of Laughter

by Rev. Marciah

When we put more joy back into religion, there will be more religion in the world. This quote from the co-founder of the Unity movement, Charles Fillmore, expresses for me, the truth that joy can be the magnet that will draw more of us back to spirituality.

Joy and laughter have to do with letting go. When we laugh, physiologically we actually loosen up our internal organs. There's a loosening up on many levels, physically, emotionally and spiritually.



I believe that in loosening up we become more open and receptive to whatever the message is, religious or otherwise. Humor gets the point across like no other means of communication.

And I'm not talking jokes here. Being able to laugh at our own lives, our everyday foibles, is important, especially in these times of major stress.

We, individually and collectively, are all going through big changes as we move into the next century. We all need to lighten up and not take ourselves so seriously.

Humor comes from the word "umere" which means to be fluid, as in water. When under stress, humor has a way of allowing us to detach ourselves from challenging circumstances instead of being swallowed up by them. In that sense, humor is a very spiritual quality.

Humor," wrote theologian Reinhold Neibuir, "is a prelude to faith, and laughter is the beginning of prayer."

Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, that your joy may be full." He admonished His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion to find and express their joy.

If Jesus is telling His followers, the ones, who will be carrying His message, to fully be in their joy, I believe we might pay attention to that as well.

Recently I have a conversation with a member of my church. For the last three weeks she has been going through daily radiation treatments. She is in the process of regaining her strength after a real-life struggle with breast cancer – pretty serious stuff. My friend shared with me how scary her experience had been, until she tapped into the healing power of humor.

One afternoon before going in for her daily treatment she had an inspiration. After watching the comedian Mr. Bean (a British import) on videotape one afternoon, she noticed a picture of his expressive face on the cover of the tape jacket. In a moment of brilliance she cut out his picture (nose and eyes only) and Scotch-taped it to her chest. You can imagine the surprise the radiologist received when preparing her for her treatment. He opened her blouse and found staring back at him Mr. Bean’s big, bulging eyes. Shock was followed by minutes of healing laughter.

This brave woman, in the midst of a very challenging situation, found that she was able to look at her serious health issue with holy humor. She was able to look at her life in a lighter way and turn what was a painful and scary experience into a healing one, not only for herself, but also for the technician, whose job must be a difficult one.

There are 287 references to joy, gladness, merriment, rejoicing, delighting, and laughing in the Bible, so there is something very important for us here.

The Gospel literally means “**Good News!**” So may we all be blessed with our heavenly seventh sense, our sense of holy humor, and find the joy in living fully in the way of the Christ.”

