

GAME WARDEN CHAPLAIN'S CHAT



"WORDS OF LIFE"

The word for this month, interestingly enough, is not really a Christmas, Hanukkah, or any other happy celebration day. But, I believe it's a word we need to remember because it effects so many people. The word is pronounced, "merimnao," and it means "be anxious about." Now, I'm not talking about standing in a line at a store hoping the item you want won't sell out before you get to the front, or, hoping the dressing or stuffing turns out well and is cooked long enough that whoever eats it won't suffer from salmonella poisoning. It's really a long-term word in respect to the emotions we may feel brought about by disappointment, sadness, grief or stress.

Christmas, for most of us, is a happy time, a religiously filled with joy time, a "wow, I hope I get the shotgun, dress or concert tickets I've been wanting" time. But for many, it is a time when some just want to survive the holidays because it reminds them that their loved one will not be there for Christmas; that the time of year always seems to be when bad things happen or the time when a tragedy dropped on them like the weight of the world and every year they're suffocated by the anxiety that tends would cripple anyone emotionally. So, how, if you're in this situation or if you know someone in this situation, can the phrase, "Surviving the Holidays" apply to you or to them?

"I used to feel the day before on January 2," admits this situation. It's hard

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make it through a day when you've lost a loved one. But when the expectations of Thanksgiving and Christmas, or any of the other yearly holidays you or your friends may celebrate, are added on top of that, feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression can be compounded. There are, believe it or not, things that can help. Notice I wrote, "can help," because only through time can something like this be healed, and then maybe never. But there are things that can help. Psychologists and Counsellors give these steps:

like I'd like to go to sleep Thanksgiving and wake up one who finds herself in enough to get up and

1. Recognize that the holidays are going to be tough—emotionally, relationally, physically, spiritually.
2. Don't fight the added emotions: accept them and let them come. Emotions are one of the great Gifts the Lord has given us for feeling, cleansing, reflecting and healing.
3. Set realistic expectations for yourself—understand your limitations
4. Pray, meditate, reflect, share and disclose your feelings to family and friends.

If you are someone that is not anxious about the holidays, don't feel guilty. However, many of the people you and I will come into contact with during these days will need a word of hope, understanding, kindness, grace and joy. In other words, they will need YOU.

"Watching Ourselves"

The Salvation Army Santa Claus clangs his bell. The sidewalks and hallways of Malls are so crowded you can hardly move. Exhaust fumes are the chief fragrance in the parking lot and it clings to your clothes as you walk through the stores. Everyone is rushing to get in, to get "it" and get out, never really noticing the people standing in line next to them or even considering what all the fuss is about or why there's a fuss at all. A "fuss!" That's what it was long ago as a new baby cried for the first time in a barn. Why all the fuss? Children were born in barns all the time; born on roof-tops; born in the street, sometimes.

Thursday was Thanksgiving. Friday was Black Friday. Saturday was Small Business Day. Sunday was, well honestly for most of us a day to sleep in—either in bed or in the pew as Pastor Cosmo DeBloviote delivered his handwritten homily. Today is Cyber-



Monday and they are predicting over \$3 billion in online sales. What a fuss!

The innkeeper asked, "Why the fuss, its just a baby." The kids, waiting in the car for mom to pop into a store for a minute and thinking, "What's the fuss?" I cannot wrap a present to save my life, so I put it in a bag wondering what the fuss is about wrapping. That's not the present, the present is inside! "What's the fuss," I wonder.

But if you concentrate just for an instant, far off in the deeps of you somewhere you can feel the beating of your heart. For all its madness and lostness and fussiness and busy-ness, you can feel it. In all the rush and the push and the credit card anxiety; in all the pomp and the pompousness; in all the ritual, the rites, the religiosity of it all, you can feel it. Something's coming. Something that no-one ever thought would happen. And you and I, along with the world, hold our breath.

"Family Foundations"

A Parents Night Before Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house, I searched for the tools to hand to my spouse. Instructions were studied and we were inspired, In hope we could manage "Some Assembly Required."

The children were quiet (not asleep) in their beds, While Dad and I faced the evening with dread: A kitchen, two bikes, Barbie's town house to boot! And, thanks to Grandpa, a train with a toot!

We opened the boxes, my heart skipped a beat... Let no parts be missing or parts incomplete! Too late for last-minute returns or replacement; If we can't get it right, it goes in the basement!

When what to my worrying eyes should appear, But 50 sheets of directions, concise, but not clear, With each part numbered and every slot named, So if we failed, only we could be blamed.

More rapid than eagles the parts then fell out, All over the carpet they were scattered about. "Now bolt it! Now twist it! Attach it right there! Slide on the seats, and staple the stair! Hammer the shelves, and nail to the stand." "Honey," said hubby, "you just glued my hand."

And then in a twinkling, I knew for a fact That all the goy dealers had indeed made a pact To keep parents busy all Christmas Eve night With "assembly required" till morning's first light.

We spoke not a word, but kept bent at our work, Till our eyes, they went bleary; our fingers all hurt. The coffee went cold and the night, it wore thin Before we attached the last rod and last pin.

They laying the tools away in the chest, We fell into bed for a well-deserved rest. But I said to my husband just before I passed out, "This will be the best Christmas, without any doubt.

Tomorrow we'll cheer, let the holiday ring, And not have to run to the store for a thing! We did it! We did it! The toys are all set, For the perfect, most perfect, Christmas, I bet!"

Then off to dreamland and sweet repose I gratefully went, Though I supposed there's something to say for those self-deluded... I'd forgotten that BATTERIES are never included!

Behind the Person: AC Ellis Powell

What Does Your Faith Mean to You

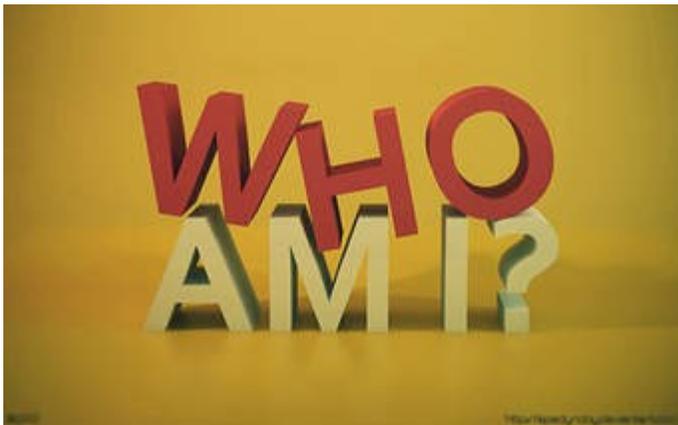
“My faith means so many things to me. My faith allows me to breathe in those moments when I wasn’t sure I could. It gives me pause when anger, jealousy and sadness seem to overwhelm me. My faith gives me so much joy when I realize that I have been blessed with a wonderful family. And most of all it gives me extreme happiness knowing that I am not in control and that I have Heaven to look forward to.”

When Did You Come to This Faith?

“I have struggled with many things throughout my life both personally and in my career. I always found it easy to question my faith initially in these hard times. However, I almost always immediately correct these thoughts. I have attended many different Christian denominations throughout my life. And only later in life did I realize that my faith is bigger and stronger than any one church. My faith was developed very early as a child through interactions with family and nature. But I would say that when I became a father and husband and truly realized my blessings is when my faith really strengthened. I think this strengthening came from the awesome responsibility God placed on me to raise my children as Christians. I would also say that it strengthened tremendously when I married my wife. She truly has been a rock and calming force in my life, always reminding me of the power and plan God has.”

How Does a Difficult Situation at Home or in the Field Help or Hinder Your Faith?

“I kind of answered this in the previous question, but I may be able to explain it more. For me it is simply this, let go of the problem and pray. To me saying let go is not accurate because I don’t mean it in a do nothing literal sense. A better way to say it would be to pray hard about what action you need to take and how would that action serve God.”



The question of “Who am I?” has been the same sense human-kind has been sentient. When we began to notice that we were different than, say, a rock or a tree or a poodle, we began to ask the question. According to Soren Kierkegaard, the great Danish philosopher, it is a question we all seek to answer to discover the “self.” It follows us like our own shadow until we take time to contemplate and understand who we are, or we simply see it so often that we become indifferent to it.

Philosophical questions seem to belong only to the world of academia, but in truth, they are all around us each day. Our decisions portray us as to who we are. Our relationships help form us into who we are. Our family units dictate to society who we are. Our hopes, dreams, fantasies and aspirations of

life begin to develop our sense of who we are. However, these will never be enough. There is always that nagging feeling that we can be more, that we’ve been made to be more, that our lives go beyond our sense of work, age, sex and education. It is, fundamentally, a question that screams for an answer and yet, fundamentally, we run from the question with our hair on fire. I submit that you have been made FOR a reason, TO a purpose and WITH a hope. There’s an answer out there. Seek, and you will find!

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