



## Hold On To Joy!

*...for the joy of the Lord is your strength!* (Nehemiah 8:10)

In this season we need to hang on to joy. It is easy to let the cares and worries of these days be the main focus of our attention and let them overwhelm us. We must not lose sight of the beauty and joy God continues to surround us with because it is indeed in that beauty and joy that we find the strength we need, especially in times like these.

Spring is already moving toward summer. There have been signs of new life visible all around us during these last weeks. Have you noticed? Some spring flowers are still with us. Nesting season is in full swing and baby birds are making their appearance. Morning doves and early nesters, who lay two clutches a year, may even be ready for their second brood soon since their first eggs may have been laid in February! The trees are losing their winter look of black lace in favor of flower vails and growing leafy coats. Warm spring days are filled with flower perfumes and bird songs when the bird songs are not drowned out by the lawn mowers! Those who live with nature all around them are lucky. Those who are surrounded by concrete, asphalt, and steel may have to look harder, but even there, signs of God's gift of spring can be found – like the young rabbit I saw contentedly munching a weed in a shopping center parking lot planter box in the middle of metro Chicago some years ago.

Joy can also be found in the signs of God's presence we see in people who are giving of themselves and those risking their safety to help others. This is one time when, even with all the bad news in the world, good news stories are being heard more than usual.

Lord, help us not to miss these signs of your joyful life around us. Help us to tap into their power and strength as we continue to deal with the unknown and sometimes scary prospects that the future holds. Remind us to be thankful for each day and not take life for granted! Preserving life must be the focus of our attention not personal, organizational, or political ambitions or financial gain.

**This week, continue to pray** for those who are sick and separated. Pray for caregivers and those dealing with the economic realities created by this pandemic. Pray for those making the decisions that affect all of us as we move forward. Remember Jesus calls us to put people first and care for the 'least of these' among us – the poor; the sick; the prisoner; the homeless; the marginalized.



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