

*Laughter is a holy thing. It is as sacred as music and silence and solemnity,  
maybe more sacred. Laughter is like a prayer, like a bridge over which  
creatures tiptoe to meet each other. Laughter is like mercy; it heals.  
When you can laugh at yourself, you are free.*

Ted Loder

Christmas, 2020

Dearest Family and Friends:

The above quote on laughter struck me. In this house, during a pandemic, with Bob in heaven the fourth Christmas since his death, laughter rarely rings out as it once did from beamed ceilings, from upstairs hallways, happily, daily. It was as commonplace when he was alive as eating and sleeping. His laughter, our laughter covered a multitude of sins, assuaged tiffs, its light radiating healing into dark moods, troubling thoughts. Oh how I miss his unique one liners, his take on everyday life! Yet many times four years out from his passing, I am able to laugh freely with family, with friends and sometimes, even to laugh at myself.

'Tis the season to say, "Merry Christmas" and to sing "Joy to the World." Merriment and joy and laughter *this* year, 2020? The year of the corona virus, Covid 19? The year when smiles are hidden behind masks and one hopes our crinkly eyes above them will signal mirth and interest and conversation, that our laughter and cheerful greetings (muffled behind those masks) will be understood!

And this is the year of the Zoom. I zoom many clients every week. My clients are a source of inspiration to me, and certainly of purpose. Their challenges echo my own. Even in the toughest of sessions we can laugh. We laugh at the ironies, the stutter steps we all take in the healing process. We laugh and yes, sometimes we cry. The laughter and the tears, close, all of a piece.

For me, even without Bob at my side and even in a pandemic, Christmas represents a source of pure joy and promise. Past memories bring sweet tears. I sense him celebrating with me as I decorate our home as we always did, sans the 10-foot Frasier fir. Now a four-foot replica will do. I get a good deal on poinsettias at Home Depot and fill our home with shouts of red. I listen to carols starting Thanksgiving, access Advent devotionals, read Isaiah and the Christmas story in Matthew and Luke. I begin to feel the wonder of the Incarnation again taking shape in my heart. I may be alone, I may not laugh out loud as I did when Bob was earthbound, but I am smiling with joy, as I decorate, play carols. And I am smiling behind my mask when I venture out.



Tonight I pray for healing, for our nation, our world. I pray for grace, mercy and the holy laughter Ted Loder references in the above quote. I pray for perspective, for courage and for patience. For wisdom to grasp that Faith survives beyond the bounds of church sanctuaries. And I pray for a grateful heart despite all the vicissitudes present in 2020.

Love, Grace and Peace dear ones, this Christmas...

*The angel said unto them, Fear not: for Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy...*  
Luke 2:10