

Day 1

Celebrate Life

Excitement rules my heart. There are many reasons why we ought to celebrate life. Look around. There are many refreshing events, from the simple to the grandiose. Behold those that spare us from languishing in misery. Despite apparently never ending struggles, we all have the reasons to be joyful.

In that fateful month of October, cheers circled the globe. The world applauded two relatively young scientists—Dr. Andrew Z. Fries and Dr. Craig C. Mello—who won the 2006 Nobel Prize for medicine. No doubt they celebrated. They rejoiced for garnering the sought-after recognition in less time than expected. The world exulted. Their work drew healing closer to victims of AIDS, blindness, cancer, and other incurable diseases of our time. Hope endures forever.

Speaking of the Nobel Prize, did you know this award was founded by Mr. Destruction himself? During the latter

half of the 19th century, Alfred Nobel invented and patented dynamite. It was told that one day he saw his obituary published erroneously in the newspapers. After this bizarre error, he had an appalling realization about his invention. He was shocked at the thought of how he would be remembered. This and the death of his brother from the very explosives he created moved him to establish the Nobel Foundation. He channeled a large sum of his wealth to change things. Now, the world celebrates the best accomplishments and calls them the Nobel Prizes. Not many investigate the origin of the award. Peace endures forever.

Not everyone likes Janet Jackson. I do, but not for the music she makes. Her career began in 1986 when she released her album “*Control*”. She broke from her brother Michael’s shadow. However, the Super Bowl incident damaged Janet’s image. It was a hard climb for her to reach the top again. She is a survivor of life challenges. The big advantage that helped Janet was her spiritual maturity, noted at the time of this writing. Clearly, she celebrates life. This she does by plainly being herself, doing her own thing. Faith endures forever.

Right in our own backyard, we can celebrate too. Noli and I were best of friends in primary school. I laughed at every funny story he told. What stands out in my memory was his passion for the creative arts. He drew caricatures so skillfully that he became a cartoonist. I thought he later landed a lucrative job sketching Shrek for DreamWorks.

When we were in school, he quickly finished his work, so he could draw and paint. College to him was the great thrill. He majored in Fine Arts in one of the country's most historic universities. Today, I'm sure he still goes through life's ups and downs like the rest of us. But he definitely celebrates life. He pursued his infatuation for the arts that now bountifully sustains his happy household. True love endures forever.

Surely there are myriads of grounds for celebrating life. Many of us have our own personal successes here and there. True, we don't seem to see the breakthroughs at times. Dark clouds of frustrations obscure our sight. Certainly there are trickles of blessings. Seek the bundles of joy somewhere somehow. Goodness endures forever.

Contemporary sufferings seem hard to imagine. There are calamities, wars, lawlessness, terrorism, poverty, diseases, pollution, domestic problems, and more. Find

comfort in the thought that these are more bearable compared to the burdens of the past. In ancient times, there was the great deluge, the hideous Great Depression, World War I, the Holocaust, the 2nd World War. Mercy endures forever.

What is the point in all these? It is that instead of basking in the haze of dismay, let us rise with high fervor to greet every situation in blissful disposition. Not that we are to totally ignore our problems. But I suggest we face them with the ringing confession, putting to mind that we Homo sapiens are a resilient breed. Wisdom endures forever.

Whatever your source of strength is, if you aim to overcome, you conquer. Some find vigor from within, some from without. Some find it from the brute forces of nature, some with supernatural intervention. Still, others obtain their power as they trust the One they call My Refuge and My Fortress. As such, “they are not afraid of the terror by night; nor of the arrow that flies by day; nor of the pestilence that stalks in darkness; nor of the destruction that lays waste at noon day.”¹ Salvation endures forever.

Let us therefore celebrate life. The rough edges are meant to sharpen our mettle. Our ordeals make us tougher

against daunting catastrophes. Be the source of delight, for joy is contagious. Be the sponsor of conviction, for faith induces miracles. Be the champion of courage, for boldness leads to triumph. Pray that others follow the tested pathways we tread as we leave modest but lasting legacies. When we step into eternity, when the victories are passed on to the next generation, then life endures forever.

STUDY GUIDE

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1. Explain why the writer says excitement rules his heart. With what you see around you in the world each day, do you share the same feeling? Why? Or why not?
2. In the case of Dr. Freis and Dr. Mello, why did the writer say hope endures forever?
3. Undoubtedly, the story behind the founding of the Nobel Prize causes one to feel good. What about you, what do you feel and think about it? Elaborate your thoughts and feelings.
4. Do you agree that Janet Jackson's case is one that shows the power of faith in action? Why? Or why not?

¹ Extracted from the 91st Psalm.

Picket Fence: A Personal Journey

Essays & Stories for Meditation

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5. Within your own surrounding and with your own experiences, cite reasons why we can celebrate.
6. Which successes in your life can you cite that you are thankful about? Include big and small successes.
7. The writer refers to his source of strength. What is this?
8. What about you, where do you draw your own strength to face life's challenges?
9. Explain why the writer says life endures forever.