

July 15, 2011

“Echoes of the Heart”

Reflections on Life and Community Living

Trust in the fruits of your hard work and dedication. In our active and busy lives, it's normal to be troubled by many things. Without blinking, easily, fear and anxiety creep into our minds and spirits.

Are we going to be good enough and successful enough to avoid failure and embarrassment? Are we going to realize our hopes and dreams in life? Are the flow of life and the oft-times random good or bad fortune that shapes our lot in life going to bend our way?

Stated more directly, are we going to be a *winner*? Are we going to be happy and fulfilled when we shut off the light at night for a restful sleep?

No guarantees on any of this, for sure. And worrying about it doesn't make it better for us in any way.

Most of the time in life, there comes a point where all we can do is *turn it over* to God in trust and hope for the best. Trust is the key. But of course, trust has a context in any of our lives and that context has much to do with the hard work and preparation we invest in pursuit of our goals.

Confidence and hope build in our lives when we *trust* in the fruits of our hard work and dedication. I am reminded of the saying, *The harder I work, the luckier I get.*

Hard work builds confidence. Robert Drake writes stories about growing up in Tennessee a couple of generations ago. In one story, he talks about Miss Caroline Walker who had taught piano in those parts of Tennessee as long as anyone could remember. Her two goals were to teach her girl students the piano and to teach them to be ladies.

She also taught them to play one piano piece perfectly at the annual piano recital, for which she would rehearse them over and over until they had it right. Beyond this, she always gave them specific instructions on how to sit on the piano bench, how to spread their skirt, and how to announce the song by standing straight and holding their hands together at their waist.

This one year, when the night of the recital came at the local high school auditorium, Miss Caroline's pupils were each waiting their turn. When Ann Louise's turn came, she was terrified and thought for sure she was going to faint. As she moved forward to the wings of the stage where her teacher, Miss Caroline, was waiting, she wasn't sure she was going to make it.

Seeing how nervous she was, Miss Caroline put her hands on Ann Louise's shoulders, bent down and whispered in her ear:

You have worked hard. You know this piece. You have nothing to fear. And remember, I am counting with you all the way.

And then with a little shove, she pushed Ann Louise onto the stage where, suddenly, she was facing this large audience of everybody's relatives, including her own. Calmly, she announced her piece, spread her skirt and sat on the piano bench. Right away, she noticed that she was much calmer than she thought she would be.

She also noticed that Miss Caroline was still there on the wings. Then she remembered the last words she had said to her: *I am counting "with you" all the way; not, I am counting "on you," but "with you."*

Buoyed by the encouragement of her teacher, but also by remembering how hard she had worked in her practice sessions, suddenly a confident calm came over her. And then music, at her command, came cascading out of the baby grand into the welcoming hearts of the multitude—full of life and joy.

Hard work builds belief. In all things in our lives, hard work and dedication build trust and confidence. They also build belief. And the truth is, there are no short cuts. We either put in the hard work or we do not. We either dedicate ourselves or we do not.

Although some of us are more naturally gifted than others, still, we all have gifts. The key is how we use our gifts and the dedication and resolve we display in using them. In most areas of life, our doubts and anxieties dissipate in proportion to the hard work and dedication we put in.