

## **“Echoes of the Heart”**

*Reflections on Life and Community Living*

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**Finding our way back.** With Easter anticipation in the air, and with all the craziness that is making the rounds these days (i.e., election 2008, the Elliot Spitzer affair, our staggering economy), I keep coming back to the improbability of Easter morning.

Who would have thought? Who could have anticipated? Who could have expected such a transformation of events? No matter where you are along the spiritual pathway, still, the *idea* of Easter joy is compelling.

Can darkness give way to light? Can despair redound to uncontainable joy? Can the apparent end transmute into a stunning new beginning? Can the human spirit *come back* from virtually any set back or defeat?

To all of this, Easter shouts out a resounding *yes*.

The truth about Easter is that it shatters the categories. It's beyond the rational and reasonable. It defies logic and intellect. It's a sobering reminder that—no matter what—God knows more about the future than we know.

Always, there's a mystery about us human beings—and our interactions with one another—that is more intricate and elusive than we can fathom.

The point of all this is that—with any of us—stuff can happen that can throw us off our game and leave us groping for easy answers. And then, suddenly, we wake up one day and wonder, *what just happened to my life?*

**Discipline and persistence.** *Finding our way back* from the jaws of any defeat, failure or set back—from times when we haven't been at our best—is to a great extent a matter of attitude and perspective; it's a question of belief, faith and hope. It is also a matter of persistence and discipline.

One of the things that most amazes me about the candidates in the current election is the level of discipline they display in the living out of their fast-paced lives. With all the baiting going on, all the innuendo, the hurtful rumors, along with mean-spirited accusations from unpredictable angles, it is amazing how they, for the most part, keep their cool.

It can't be easy. All sorts of temptations to react must do battle in their spirit. One of the things they teach us is the importance of *staying on our game*; what in the campaign is termed, *staying on message*.

It's human for any of us to *get off message* now and then—to lapse into episodes of anger, resentment and *woe is me*. A key, here, is to stay close to our core self. We *find*

*our way back* from whatever low points come our way in life—whatever losses or set backs or failures—by remembering who we are at our best; and then having the discipline and persistence to *stay on message*.

**We're a resilient people.** As I look around, noting the hardships and struggles that are so common place among people, I'm amazed at the resilience of folks. It may be merely a matter of *doing what we have to do*, as if to suggest: *do we really have a choice?*

And the truth is, probably not. When storms strike our marriage, we still have to take care of the kids. When life at the work site is stressful, still, we need the job because we need the income. When we lose a cherished loved one, still, our lives go on. Always, there are others who need us whose lives would be seriously diminished were we not around.

From God's point of view, there is no abyss from which we cannot *find our way back*. Symbolically speaking, this is Easter's powerful message. *We find our way back* because we can. God's spirit is with us, nurturing us and emboldening us along the way.

Again, the key: stay true to our best self—in faith and in hope—day after day, hour after hour, moment after moment. This is the discipline; it is also the path back from any defeat, failure or heartbreak.

Our resilience is the fruit of our discipline which, over time, builds up the confidence and trust that sustains us.