

“Echoes of the Heart”

Reflections on Life and Community Living

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Are you living the good life? We hear all the time, in our daily banter, *he/ she has it made*. Or, *the Diazes or the Browns have it all; they're living the good life*.

Do we really believe this? That any particular person or family *has it all*, whatever that means? What these sorts of comments usually mean is that there's some dissatisfaction with *my life*, or that there's some sort of elusive life out there (in the wider community) that continues to *elude me*.

Are you living *the good life*?

Truth be told, *the good life* has as many definitions as there are people. And the factors that contribute to the *goodness* of the life are many and complex. They have to do with health, personal relationships, income, job satisfaction, leisure time and on and on.

Sadly, in our wider culture, *the good life* tends to be understood in terms of achieved results, or what we might call *the end game*. When in truth, what our lives are really about—day in and day out—is *the process*.

In Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, there's a part where the caterpillar meets Alice on her *wonderland* journey and says, *Who are you?*

And she responds, *Well, I hardly know, sir, just at the present. At least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then.*

Life is a process, and that's where the meaning is. The point Alice reveals in her reply to the caterpillar is that our lives are always changing, unfolding, evolving, moving towards some end, some purpose.

Life—always—is a process. However, if we *take a look*; isn't that where the meaning is—the meaning of our lives?

Think about your life! Don't we tend to devote too much energy and worry about the *end* or the *goal* that our lives are about, rather than the process of arriving at the *end* or the *goal*?

For example, all the time, we'll say or think things like: *When I get my degree, then my life will be fine*. Or, *when I get the promotion, then I'll be on my way*. Or, *when my children are raised and on their own ...or, when I finish the project at work ... whatever it is*.

The point is, if we're not careful, we can easily end up living our lives focused only on the goal, the end game, not realizing that what's important is the process: the process of

getting the degree or gaining the promotion; the process of raising our children or finishing the project at work.

The process is where we struggle and strive and work things out; it's where we learn and grow as we live out our commitments and responsibilities. Our lives are about the journey, which urges us to *stop and smell the roses* along the way.

One day at a time. Part of our problem as Americans is that, too often, we're in a hurry. We want instant everything; instant food, instant transportation, instant good health, instant results at work. Due largely, perhaps, to our consumer-crazed culture, we're not a patient people.

We have trouble adjusting to the reality that we don't have to resolve all the problems and challenges of our lives by sundown every day. It's okay to leave some things for tomorrow.

An emphasis on *process*, therefore, reminds us that we don't have to know and understand everything today. Some answers that we're anxiously seeking will emerge tomorrow, next week, next month or next year.

Our mind, heart and spirit need time. They need time for the natural process of life's unfoldings—life's learning and personal growth—to take place. Put another way, there are countless things we can't know at the moment that will become more clear to us as the future unfolds.

The thing about *the good life* is that, in a very real way, it's always here—in the whisper of the wind as we live out our lives ... one day at a time.