

Choose Joy

Handout

Resources: **TED talk with Pope Francis 17:51 min**
“Why the only future worth building includes everyone”

Faith Calls Us to Joy

For Dr. Barbara Holmes, our faith invites us to choose joy amid crisis and injustice:

Our current circumstances require resilience and the steadfast belief that joy is a healing inner event and a spiritual practice....

BIPOC folks who remember the ways of the elders have seen it in action. Performance of joy while the wounds are still being inflicted is not a display of otherworldly strength. It is an act of faith that God will not give us more than we can bear....

We are not required to fight for our reality; we can just live it. We can be weird and whole and as shapeshifting as necessary, for we are being called to another purpose. We are being invited to awaken to our true nature as spirit beings, energy sharers, and prophets of potential. The joy spoken of in Holy Scripture is accessible, but also has a certain “beyondness” to it: The world didn’t give it and the world can’t take it away. As we hear from Jesus in John 16:22: “So you have pain now; but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.” [1]

Brian McLaren describes the radical trust and resilience that spiritual practices can offer in difficult times:

We have to prepare ourselves to live good lives of defiant joy even in the midst of chaos and suffering. This can be done. It has been done by billions of our ancestors and neighbors. Their legacy teaches us to see each intensifying episode of turbulence as a labor pain from which a new creative opportunity can be born. Life will be tough; the only question is whether we will become tougher, wiser, and more resilient.... The communities that learn and teach ... spiritual resilience will become vital resources for

everyone. (We can hope that some Christian communities will take part in this work.) These individual and communal practices will help us dump bitterness, fear, disappointment, and toxicity and refuel with mercy, vision, anticipation, and equanimity. They will help us ignore what deserves to be ignored and monitor what needs to be monitored. They will help us reframe our narratives, so we can mourn, grieve, and lament ... even as we imagine, celebrate, and labor for the birth of a better future....

To trust in the process is another way of saying to trust in an intelligence wiser than current human intelligence, to trust in a love deeper than current expressions of human love, to trust in a desire stronger and wiser than current expressions of human desire. Christians refer to this wisdom, love, and desire as God or the Divine or the Creative Spirit, and others can find their own ways of naming it.... To use familiar biblical language, we will need to walk by faith through the valley of the shadow of death [Psalm 23:4], always holding anticipative space for something beautiful to be born, especially during the most painful contractions. [2]