

Death Can Take A Holiday

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Each of us is put here on earth to learn, share, love, appreciate, and give of ourselves. None of us knows when this incredible journey will end, but it can come to an end at any moment. Perhaps this is God's way of telling us that we need to make the most out of every single day. It's important for us not to take for granted those things and people precious to us. It's important for us make a special effort to cherish them and love on them as much as we can when we can, for life is precious and there are no guarantees of tomorrow.

Over a short period of time, our community has experienced a number of losses. Young men, taken before their time, who were with us one day and gone the next. It's always hard for parents to bury a child. The death of a child seems to violate the natural order of things. But so does the loss of a husband and father and grandfather, a mother and grandmother, especially when the parting is unexpected.

Death can take a holiday. One of the most difficult aspects to deal with is the reality that the person will never again be part of family life. Holidays exasperate this. But we can't let death win.

Grieving is like a wound that needs time to heal, and everyone heals at different rates, but facing the grief can be the best medicine toward healing. Each contribution helps in finding a new sense of purpose while keeping the loved one's memory alive. Letting people be there in whatever way they are is also an important part of this healing process. A friend called me during a time I was going through a period of grief, sharing, "John, we don't know what to do for you. If you want to be alone, we will give you space. If you want company, we will be there. Regardless, we want you to know we love you." Knowing I had friends who cared for me and were there for me helped me get through the holidays and realize healing, even if I didn't always avail myself with their offer.

This year, some friends and family will be holding Christmas without a loved one. Their faith and their memories and the love shared by friends and neighbors are the gifts that will help them through the holidays. Let us be the Christ-light for them in their darkness. Let us weep with them and laugh with them and be there for them. We are here to help each other on our journeys – to help walk the mile and help bear the load.