

Helpers of Joy

by Jason Jedlinski

When I need to center myself, I close my eyes, breathe deeply, and often picture Hendricks Chapel at Syracuse University, my alma mater.

It is not as fancy as the landmark basilicas and cathedrals I've been fortunate enough to visit around the world. Nor is it nearly as old. It was dedicated in 1930.

I sang in the choir at Hendricks and made lifelong friendships over breakfast as we put on our robes and vocalized before worship each Sunday. I learned treasured hymns. I was inspired and challenged by sermons offered by Rev. Tom Wolfe, now president of Iliff School of Theology. I came to appreciate the ferocious energy of the Toccata from Charles-Marie Widor's Organ Symphony No. 5 in F minor.

But none of that is what I picture in my mind's eye when I think of Hendricks Chapel. I vividly recall weekday afternoon visits, when the grand interior space was silent and empty. I would sit in a pew, look to the clerestory windows and trace with my eyes the Bible verses inscribed in foot-high gold leaf around the sanctuary.

One verse, in particular, sticks with me to this day. It gave me an entirely new perspective on religion. The verse is 2 Corinthians 1:24, translated as follows:

Not that we have lordship over your faith but are helpers of your joy.



There is no Heaven or Hell, no redemption or damnation, no miracles or judgment in that sentence. Simply this: *We are helpers of your joy.*

Helpers? Think of it this way: the sun rises every morning, whether we are awake to see it or not. A faith community like MCCDC can help us see more sunrises. It can help us appreciate the brilliant colors and majestic spectacle. It can expand our horizons and put our troubles in perspective.

Physician and philosopher Dr. Debasish Mridha puts it this way: *Every sunrise is a poem written on the Earth with words of light, warmth and love.*

By helping our joy, helping open our hearts, helping us experience more sunrises; faith can show us the gifts and possibilities that exist for us, our families and our communities should we choose to accept them.

The word JOY is literally nailed to the wall of our sanctuary, inches from the cross. Imagine what is possible if we embrace that calling together!

This Advent season, pause and ask yourself: How can the church help my joy? How can I help the joy of my MCCDC family? How can our congregation and our ministries help the joy of our communities?

We will all become richer from the answers God reveals.