

have been. Look at what can be now. God has a way of showing us more."

✳ Chris Smith hopes that when he serves at Mass at St. John Gualbert Cathedral in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, he shows, in his words, "that deaf people can do the same things that other people can do." The 16-year-old who was born deaf emphasizes that his hearing impairment doesn't—and shouldn't—limit his capabilities. "That is the lesson I want to show others by my life," he says.

✳ When George Allen of Nashville was named "counselor of the year," he thought back to the days when he was sleeping on streets and under bridges. Having hit bottom from his dependence on alcohol, he was penniless. A counselor found Allen, and challenged him to recover. "'The self-pity ends here,' she told me," Allen recalls. It took time but his commitment was firm. Now, he reaches out with that same enthusiasm to others. "Isn't life great!" Allen says often. "Just to be here and appreciate what we have is awesome."

For a little while you may have to suffer various trials... Though you do not now see Him you believe in Him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy.—1 Peter 1:6, 8

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The Christophers, 12 E. 48th St., New York, NY 10017
Father John Catoir, Director; Phone: 212-759-4050

Editorial Staff: Stephanie Raha, editor-in-chief; Margaret O'Connell and Mary Riddle, associate editors. ISSN: 8755-6901
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Ignite a "spark" in others

Sometimes our "spark" of enthusiasm can light the way for others. Our attitude and actions can give others a message of encouragement that makes positive things happen.

✳ "Be a force for good." Antonio Valencia came to New York from his native Mexico in 1954. Alone and speaking no English, he eventually landed a job as a live-in housekeeper. "I was tempted to go back many times because I was so lonesome here," Valencia says. "But there was something that made me stay here, the opportunity to help my people." These days, the 70-year-old tells others from his homeland their options, helps them find jobs and housing, and gives them a sense of community.

✳ "It's never too late to make a change." By the time William Lloyd Garrison started publishing his antislavery newspaper in Boston in 1831, slavery had marred the history of this nation for more than two centuries. He would wage a war in print for decades: "On this subject... I will not retreat a single inch—and I will be heard." After a time, he and others like him were heard; their passion for justice won out.

✳ "You're not alone." Tony Giorgio of Orlando, Florida, always thought that children in need got help. Then a friend's child died because money for a bone marrow transplant was a few days late. Today, he works to find money and medical expertise for ill and dying children. He takes time off from work—time he loses pay for—to do this "extra" job. It's his way of ensuring that no child or family ever feels alone during a time of suffering.

✳ "You are one of a kind." Naomi Elizabeth would bemoan the death of those younger than she, saying, "Why doesn't God take me? I'm old and useless." Her son-in-law told her, "God probably doesn't want you because you still have something to do." In the last 10 years of her life, living in a Kentucky nursing home, she found her mission. As a kind, positive person, she made others feel good about themselves every day.

✳ "Never underestimate your power." Ask anyone at Notre Dame High School in Utica, New York, to name a student with enthusiasm for constructive action and the answer will inevitably be Jamie Fazio. The 17-year-old encourages other students to participate in activities and volunteer their time. "I try to get out there and talk to kids in school," he says. "I try to get them to use their gifts and talents."

As automotive pioneer Henry Ford put it: "Enthusiasm is the yeast that makes your hope rise to the stars... the sparkle in your eye... the swing in your gait, the grip in your hand, the irresistible surge of your will, and your energy to execute your ideas. Enthusiasts are fighters. They have fortitude. They have the staying qualities."

Rekindle the gift of God that is within you... for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love.—2 Timothy 1:6, 7

"Enthusiasm is one of the most powerful engines of success. When you do a thing, do it with your might. Put your whole soul into it. Stamp it with your own personality. Be active, be energetic, be enthusiastic and faithful, and you will accomplish your object. Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

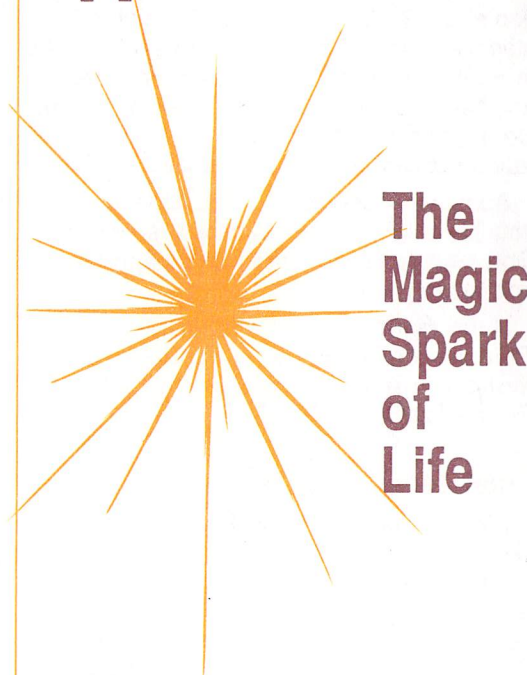
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CHRISTOPHER NEWS NOTES
12 EAST 48th STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10017
September 1993 No. 358

One evening, the father of poet Emily Dickinson hurried to the church building in Amherst, Massachusetts, and began urgently pulling the bell rope.

Hearing the sound of the bell, villagers rushed from their homes. "What was the alarm?" they wondered. "Fire? Accident?"

It was neither.

Overcome by the beauty of the sunset, Mr. Dickinson was summoning everyone to revel in its magnificence.

Enthusiasm is that zest for life that motivates us to do things with our whole self.

Derived from the Greek word which means "in God," enthusiasm is that special recognition of God's life in each of us. When God created man and woman, He gave us each a share in His life so that we could dream great dreams and have the courage to make them come true. He gave us His spirit of love so that we could reach out with that spirit, that love, to others.

Add enthusiasm to your life. Make sure that your life is lighted by that special "spark" from God, and positive things will happen for you and those you touch.

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.—Ezekiel 36:26-27

That magic "spark"

It's been said that life without enthusiasm is like a landscape painted in shades of gray—there is form, but no color. Instead, "be happy, render others happy, proclaim your joy, love passionately your miraculous life," suggests Robert Muller, former assistant Secretary General, United Nations. "Do not wait for a better world; be grateful for every moment of life."

✴ In public appearances, Los Angeles Dodger manager, Tommy Lasorda, preaches positive thinking and sheer gusto. In life, he practices what he preaches. "The most important thing," he says, "is that whatever you do in life, do it with all the enthusiasm and determination you have. When you wake up, thank God for all your blessings. Say to yourself, 'Boy,

Light Your Life with Enthusiasm

As with any fire, the spark of enthusiasm needs care. But, how can we nurture our enthusiasm day-by-day? Consider these ideas:

✴ **Rest in God.** Pray to hear God and be strengthened by Him. Remember the words of the psalmist: "Be still, and know that I am God."

✴ **Refresh yourself.** Take a break from your hectic pace and go for a stroll. Warm yourself in the sun, and listen to the sounds around you.

✴ **Give yourself a pep talk.** Encourage yourself just as you do your best friend, or as a best friend would do for you.

✴ **Wake up happy!** Begin each day with a fun routine: Sing in the shower or just listen to your favorite upbeat music.

✴ **Forgive yourself.** Let go of something that is stifling your enthusiasm. Give yourself a little worry time, then move on.

do I feel enthusiastic!' Then go out and do a better job than the day before."

✴ Most people who do things a thousand times do it like they've done it a thousand times before. Not Lawrence Avery. In his 40 years as a cantor at the Beth El Synagogue Center in New Rochelle, New York, he has prepared more than 1,000 young people for their bar or bat mitzvah. Says a student's mother: "That he knows what he is doing is a given. What's remarkable is his enthusiasm." At 65, he entertains little thought of retirement. "We all want a foot in eternity," he says. "I often think this is my way: to convey this beautiful message."

✴ Erin Muth lamented her lack of friends. She would watch sadly as groups of other teens passed by, talking and giggling. Then one day, she made up her mind to stop brooding—and start doing something about it. She set out to make friends with those on her softball team. At her after-school job, she resolved, "I'm going to smile a lot at the new people I meet." In her prayers, Erin concentrated on making Jesus her friend and sharing everything with

✴ **Smile often and affirm others.** A mother writes of her son's third grade teacher: "Always smiling, helpful and loving, she touched our hearts in everything she did. We have become better by knowing her."

✴ **Don't take "no" for an answer.** Persistence and enthusiasm go hand-in-hand. Be like the man who fought to keep open the neighborhood park he played in as a youth. He was a "squeaky wheel," getting people to listen to him, raising money and keeping the park alive.

✴ **Give it all you've got.** If someone asks for help, accept. Doing good for others, making them feel good, will make you feel better about life—and yourself.

✴ **Celebrate each new day!** Fix a special meal for your family. Take a friend to a movie; have a "celebrate Thursday" party; or watch a sunset. Find something each day to appreciate and celebrate.

Him. As a result of her new enthusiastic, "take-charge" approach to life, Erin has a new attitude these days. "Watch out world! Here comes the most positive person alive!"

✴ Tom and Nancy Frederick had long wanted to share with others the love of God they had experienced. One Sunday morning, attending church with their infant son, Josh, they heard about lay people serving others in the Third World. At first dismissing the idea as "for single people only," they then learned of a whole family that was going. "The word, 'family,' just lit in my mind," said Nancy. "I looked at Tom and he looked at me; we knew this was something we had to do."

As He walked by the Sea of Galilee, [Jesus] saw two brothers . . . And He said to them, "Follow Me . . ." Immediately they left their [fishing] nets and followed Him.—Matthew 4:18-20

A "spark"—in dark times

"The Romans had a phrase for it—carpe diem . . . seize the day! Make it as good a one

as it is within your power to do. Each and every day is in fact, when life begins," believes businessman Joseph Klock.

An energetic, positive attitude can mean all the difference in difficult situations.

✴ For the first time in his life, Daniel Welte found himself out of work and realizing that "joblessness can shake the soul of even a summa cum laude graduate of the school of positive thinking." Welte developed some practical suggestions to keep his own and other job seekers' spirits—and enthusiasm—high: Release tension through exercise. Spend time with family and friends. Thank God first for the gift of life. Welte adds, "No matter how frustrated and terrified we become, we must persevere, trusting in the goodness of God."

✴ Julie Gibson, 34, battles leukemia with laughter and an enthusiastic love for life. During a recent hospital stay, she hung a sign on her door ordering all who entered to remember to smile and keep a sense of humor. Her doctors were not allowed to discuss chances for survival because of her view: "I'm not interested in statistics. They're only numbers and don't apply to me. I'm that one-in-a-million."

✴ With three young children and an ex-husband not paying child support, Cynthia Greer needed state aid. But this San Francisco resident decided to change her life and get off public assistance. She returned to school, took a part-time job and plans for the day they'll move into a home of their own. She still manages to take time-out for rollerskating and making candy with her daughters as well as coordinating their Girl Scout cookie sale and helping out at their school.

✴ Minnie Sawyer has had a life riddled with troubles. Her only son died at the age of three from a congenital heart condition. Her husband suffered a nervous breakdown. And Minnie herself was blind by the age of four. But this San Antonio, Texas, woman approaches life and her work at the Lighthouse for the Blind with "high energy." She enjoys her family, decorating and remodeling her home. She volunteers to teach English conversation skills to Spanish-speaking persons in her community. Her credo: "Think positive. Never look back at what could