

orphaned boy, Lansana, who needed serious medical attention.

The 8-year-old boy, a Muslim, spoke no English. Zlotolow, American and Caucasian, is Jewish. Yet, after making arrangements for Lansana to receive medical attention in New York City, Zlotolow knew he was meant to do more. Today he is in the process of adopting the youngster.

The future father and son focused on their possibilities rather than problems. While Lansana has been given a new lease on life, Zlotolow insists he's the lucky one. Since his stressful medical practice had led to health concerns, Zlotolow accepted a new, less demanding position on the West Coast and made more time in his life for friends and family. He says simply, "The kid saved my life."

*Seize the hope set before us. We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.*

*Hebrews 6:18-19*

## Trust and Openness

Consider the words of the psalmist: "You who live in the shelter of the Most High...will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust'."

Psalm 91 continues, "You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day,

or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday." We see a loving God who says, "When they call to Me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them." Note that God promises help, not an absence of trouble.

Rev. Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., offers an insight about Holman Hunt's famous painting, *The Christ Who Knocks at the Door*. "We see a man huddled behind a locked door, paralyzed by fear and darkness," he explains. "Outside the door Jesus stands with a lantern, knocking, ready to relieve the man of his burden. But... the door only has a knob on the inside. Jesus cannot enter unless the man unlocks the door."

Rolheiser thinks the artist missed an important truth. "After Jesus rises from the dead, He appears to the disciples who...are huddled together in a room, in fear, with the doors locked," he says. "Jesus comes right through the locked doors, stands inside the middle of their fear, and breathes out peace."

A businessman named Paul faced what some consider to be the ultimate fear: death. When first diagnosed with a rare and fatal cancer, Paul went through the well-known stages of denial, anger and bargaining before accepting the fact that his time on earth was limited.

"I kept saying, 'Why me, Lord?' I was afraid and I prayed hard for a miracle to be cured. Instead, God kept putting me in touch with people who were hungry to hear about Him."

At that point, Paul decided to use the rest of his time to encourage others to live their lives to the fullest and to strengthen their spirituality. A number of friends, coworkers, clients, and neighbors had their faith deepened through their encounters with him.

However great or small our troubles, opening our hearts to a loving God makes sense.



Each life journey is unique. Yet, our ultimate destination is the same: everlasting union with the God who lovingly created us. The search for peace and joy presents us with a tremendous opportunity for spiritual growth—and our day by day responses to our particular circumstances largely determine the attitude with which we live out our days.

In *A Call to Joy: Living in the Presence of God*, Matthew Kelly reminds us that, "You will not be any happier today than you were yesterday unless you do something different, or at least in a different manner, with a different state of mind or heart."

*Do not let your hearts be troubled. John 14:1*

"God has a marvelously creative way of digging us out of our worst nightmares. ...God is there to save and make new. God leaves me awestruck.


"...This magnificent God, who created our imperfect earth, cares about me and will be with me when I suffer and sustain me when I die. Awed? Yes. Amazed? Absolutely. Dazzled? Beyond belief. Afraid? Never. If I'm supposed to fear God, I don't know how. My God is way too good for that."

Rev. Paul Boudreau, U.S. Catholic

## What's Your Idea?

The Christophers want to know what subjects you would like us to cover in our upcoming News Notes. Send your suggestions to us at The Christophers, 12 East 48th Street, New York, NY 10017; or e-mail us at: [mail@christophers.org](mailto:mail@christophers.org)

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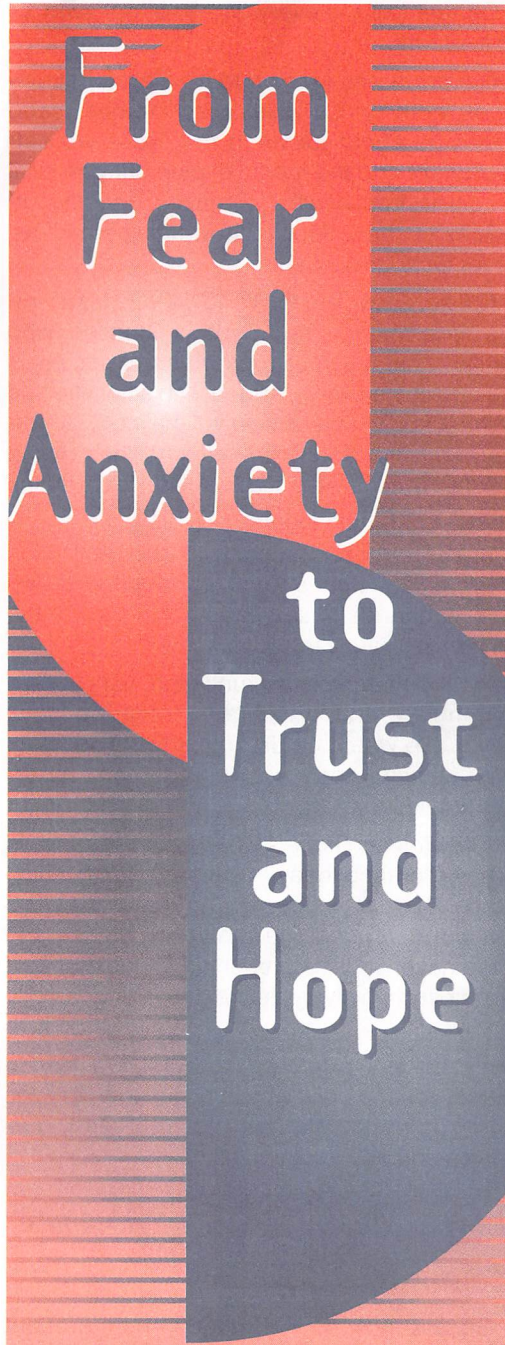
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## Coming Next

*We'll look at what it means to be a good citizen, including the obligations that come along with the rights.*



**From  
Fear  
and  
Anxiety  
to  
Trust  
and  
Hope**

**C**HRISTOPHER NEWS NOTES  
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Danger lurks in every corner of our lives, or so it seems.

Governments urge us to be alert for suspicious activity. Consumer advocates issue warnings about toxins in the foods we eat. Marketers and the media exploit our personal concerns, from health to finances, disease outbreaks to shark attacks. It would seem we've never faced more perils.

Not so, according to *Wall Street Journal* writers Jane Spencer and Cynthia Crossen, who declare that much of contemporary society is the safest in history. "Armed with scientific and technological breakthroughs," they say, "Americans have dramatically reduced their risk in virtually every area of life, resulting in life spans 60 percent longer in 2000 than in 1900."

Spencer and Crossen point to the purification of water and cleaner food, medical advances and thousands of safety devices that protect us from everyday misadventures.

Yet dread of calamity runs high, fed by often incomplete and inaccurate round-the-clock news. We watch natural disasters and wars. We see news conferences as snipers, terrorists and kidnappers hold us in their grip.

*The Boston Globe's* Charles P. Pierce says "The difference today is the speed with which partial knowledge gets relayed instantly around the world. It is an age...in which the last big thing never finds its proper context, because it is eclipsed wholly by the next big thing."

No wonder we find ourselves looking over our shoulders, expecting the worst. We need to refocus on the best, what's positive in our lives and our world. We need to trust God, ourselves and one another.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart.*

*Proverbs 3:5*

## Rebuilding Joy

So, just how do we find joy in the present and optimism for the future?

Jacqueline Gavagan, a speech pathologist with two young children, was seven weeks from giving birth to their third child when her

## Helping children deal with fear

Stephen Garber, coauthor of *Monsters Under the Bed and Other Childhood Fears*, says "It's natural for children to be afraid of things as long as the fear is age-appropriate and does not prevent them from enjoying life."

He suggests that parents:

- Think creatively. Ask children to imagine, for example, a monster shrinking away.
- Educate kids. If a child fears dogs, explain why a dog barks.
- Be a role model. Set a good example about dealing with what scares you.
- Face the fear. Slowly introduce youngsters to whatever scares them, and never ridicule fear.

husband and many of the couple's friends died in the World Trade Center attack.

"Does she still grieve?" asks Jeff Cowley, who wrote about Gavagan's experiences. "Of course. But the Brooklynite has managed to restore meaning and even some joy to her life," he says.

Gavagan established a fund in her husband's honor to sponsor a life-saving operation for a child whose family couldn't afford it. In April, 2002, she comforted a woman from Kosovo whose young son had heart surgery. He came through with flying colors.

To regain zest and find lasting satisfaction and peace of mind, according to Martin Seligman, author of *Authentic Happiness*, we need to outgrow "our obsessive concern with how we feel" and meet the challenges of love, work and family.

Still, some fear and anxiety are normal. Exploring the roots of our concerns and keeping them in perspective are essential to a God-centered and well-adjusted life.

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace.*  
*Romans 15:13*

## Fear vs. Phobia

Healthy fear, an integral part of the human experience, kept our ancestors out of the path of a charging animal, just as it keeps us from a speeding truck.

Because we are powerless to protect ourselves against new and complicated situations, many of which have unknown consequences, modern concerns loom large: from nuclear power plants that could melt down, to the discovery of toxic waste sites, to terrorists' threats.

Our complex social and political system can contribute to a sense of hopelessness. For example, since the U.S. Department of Homeland Security generally judges the risk from terrorism "significant," there are those who believe it contributes to anxiety rather than alleviating it.

Fear can become an all-consuming phobia, running the gamut from achluophobia, the fear of darkness, to zoophobia, the fear of animals. "Experts say a true phobic reaction is...a central nervous system wildfire that's impossible to mistake," according to *Time* magazine's senior science writer Jeffrey Kluger. "In the face of the thing that triggers fear, phobics experience sweating, racing heart, difficulty breathing and even fear of imminent death, all accompanied by an overwhelming need to flee."

Kluger also says that people suffering from phobias dread their next encounter with the object of their fear and develop elaborate strategies to avoid it.

Those with phobias need professional help. Great progress has been made in recent years in developing effective therapies that can help restore peace of mind.

But what about the general population, experiencing a growing preoccupation with safety, a sense of anxiety and loss of joy?

*The Lord is good, a stronghold in a day of trouble; He protects those who take refuge in Him.*  
*Nahum 1:7*

## Hope and Happiness

There are many concrete steps that can bring a sense of security and satisfaction into our lives. Sometimes, it's a matter of opening our eyes to the love before us.

• Clara Smith, a crossing guard in Clayton, Missouri, ensures that the children of Glenridge Elementary School get to school safely each morning. She is also known for her warm smile and enthusiastic greetings to passing motorists.

Simple as it sounds, people say her smile consistently cuts through their own morning aggravation. "Maybe it's the predictability of her standing there and waving that somehow makes me feel safe," says one neighbor, Clara Hundelt. "Seeing her each day makes me feel grounded."

• Polly Brotherton's husband asked for a divorce after 21 years of what she felt was a successful marriage.

It took her two years to accept the fact that she and her husband would not reconcile. Reading self-help books, talking with friends and committing herself to her art, Brotherton, a teacher and sculptress, slowly opened herself up to new possibilities. She returned to school and became a house mother for a college sorority.

"I would never say that I'm glad my divorce happened," Brotherton said in *Real Simple* magazine. "But my world has opened up and I love what I've done with my life. Receiving love and appreciation from a hundred young women was healing power for my spirit," she says. "I could not wallow in my own problems when I needed to be there for them, and they inspired me with their ambition, creativity and warmth."

• Dr. Ian Zlotolow, a specialist at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in Manhattan, routinely visited Sierra Leone to do outreach work. On one such visit he met a young