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Remembering the Least among Us

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As I enter the 2010 holiday season, I admit that I am looking forward to eating turkey, dressing, cranberry sauce, watching football and laughing out loud with my loved ones. History has proven that a good time will be had by most, if not all. However, I am acutely aware that many people will find it difficult to celebrate the season or feel festive despite the multitude of reminders bombarding our senses as we move about our daily lives.

Sure reasons will vary, but sadness, depression and anxieties overhang our land. Over the past months, people, some of whom are our neighbors, will have lost their livelihood, their shelter, a family member/close friend or learned of a recent illness to self or loved one. Believe it or not, even the loss of daylight/sunlight can affect a person's mood. Human life is wrought with up and downs. None of us can escape its twists and turns, highs and lows. Finding supports and tools to effectively manage these stressors as they occur is essential to our success.

As a person of faith, prayer is important to me. It is something that I practice daily. Yet, when one is feeling "down in the dumps" or experiencing the "blues" prayer may not be enough to move one through the fog. Fortunately, mental health programs abound in our communities and are available for little to no cost. Facilities can be found online. One such website managed by the government's health administration is www.samhsa.gov.

To be candid, during the course of this year and in the span of a few months, both of my parents had major health scares. The emotional toil that it had on me, while trying to maintain full time employment, caused me great distress. I knew it and my loved ones noticed the strain as well. Thankfully, I addressed the symptoms by meeting with a therapist to help me process the sensory overload I felt. I did this in addition to my prayer and meditation routine. Within weeks, I felt better and I saw a way out. Additionally, my

parents are recuperating nicely and that too has been a relief to my heart and mind.

As we begin to navigate the pressures of the holiday season, let us remember those for whom this time may be especially difficult. If we are able to be generous of time, talent and treasure, let us consider sharing them. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the infirmed and more importantly find a reason to express gratitude. My faith teaches me that in doing these things, I am honoring each of us as a child of God. Everyone deserves respect, self worth, dignity, grace, forgiveness and love. I have learned that the reward in the giving is greater, than in the receiving. So whatever situation you are currently in, I pray your holidays will be merry, bright and filled with the awareness of God's unfailing love and light.

"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow."

~ Melody Beattie

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