

SPIRITUAL BOOK NEWS

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MAY 2007 SELECTION



PRACTICING PEACE *A DEVOTIONAL WALK THROUGH THE QUAKER TRADITION* Catherine Whitmire

Cathy Whitmire has drawn on her own experience and on the rich heritage of Quaker peacemaking to craft an absorbing book, one which will inspire and guide people of any faith and of none.

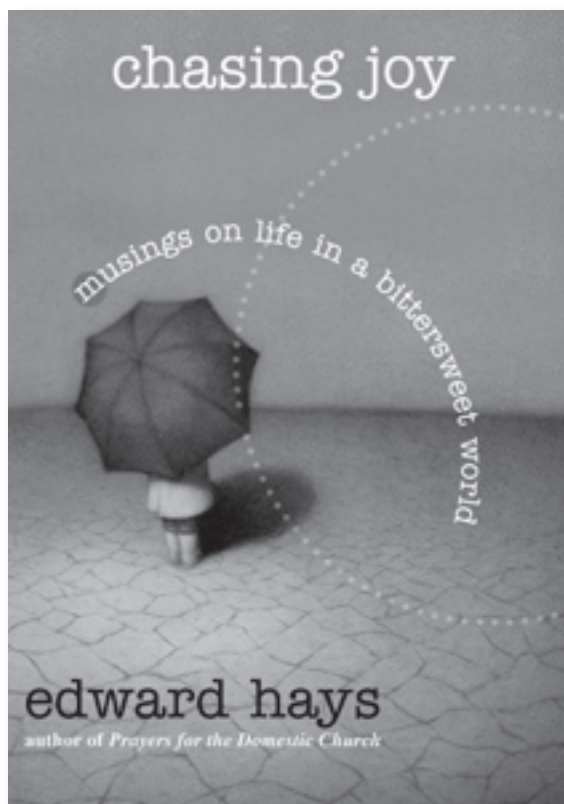
HARVEY COX

Hollis Professor of Divinity,
Harvard Divinity School

Quaker author Catherine Whitmire shares stories of successful nonviolent movements throughout history partnered with quotes mined from over 350 years of Quaker teachings on peace. Query questions lead readers on a journey to self-discovery and through the stages of practicing peace.

ISBN: 9781933495071 / 272 pages / \$16.95

FEATURED SELECTION



CHASING JOY *Musings on Life in a Bittersweet World*

Edward Hays

There are few people who consistently give us both depth and breadth--while never closing that clever and humorous edge as does Ed Hays.

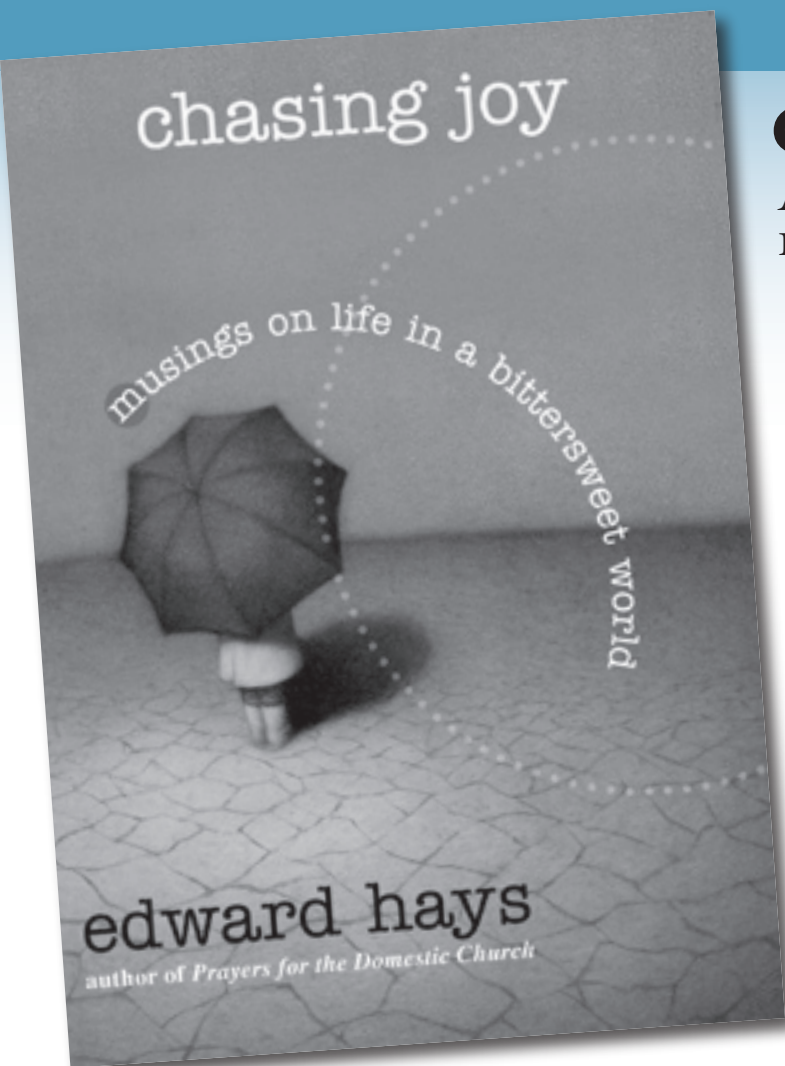
RICHARD ROHR, O.F.M.

Center for Action and Contemplation

The spiritual imagination of Ed Hays comes alive in each of these forty reflections on joyful living. Hays offers hints and spiritual exercises for cultivating a deeply rooted spirit of joy.

ISBN: 9780939516780 / 192 pages / \$12.95





CHASING JOY

Musings on Life in a Bittersweet World

Edward Hays

Wherever two or three are gathered... Suggestions for Group Use

Use the *Questions for Discussion and Reflection* as you see fit, either in your faith-sharing group, in your personal journaling, or with your spouse or friend. Groups should not neglect their use in journaling; a journal can be a useful tool for those in groups as well as for those reading on their own. Group leaders should have these questions or others ready for group discussion and sharing. All are encouraged to pose their own questions of themselves and others to make the discussion more meaningful. Deeper faith is always a goal of faith-sharing groups—let it be your guide for discussion.

- Remember Hays's advice to let challenging or difficult reflections sit for a while. When we are ready to see, God will open our eyes.
- Mark or jot down sayings and stories that speak to you in a special way. Share them with your group.
- Share your favorite chapter title with your group. Have a few laughs!
- Look for recurring themes that run through the reflections: seizing the day; living joyfully in the present moment; the role of choice; rejoicing, prayer, and gratitude; paradoxes.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

- What is the greatest joy of your life? What is the greatest joy in your life currently?
- How do you see prayer, gratitude, and joy as being related?
- What joy do you experience daily that keeps you connected to the goodness of God?
- How has your understanding of joy and living a joy-filled life changed as you've grown older?



Forest of Peace

Be sure to visit www.avemariapress.com and click on the Forest of Peace icon at the top of the page. Here you will find a link to a *National Catholic Reporter* interview with Ed Hays about *Chasing Joy*, a fascinating two-part podcast.



READER'S GROUP GUIDE

CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

CHAPTER 1

Think of a person you know who appears always joyful. How do you feel in their presence?

How do you recognize authentic joy?

Since sin exists, how can we be joyful?

What is the difference between happiness and joy?

Do you see your joy as being rooted in God's love for you?

CHAPTER 2

The devil came to Jesus in the desert when he was alone, vulnerable, and weak. The antidote to that is community—others who support us on our spiritual journey. When do you experience the temptation to enter into despair? To whom or what do you turn to reclaim your God-given joy?

CHAPTER 3

Before reading this reflection, answer for yourself the questions Hays asks at the end of the first paragraph—is it possible to be cheerful when you are engulfed in lifeless routine?

Share with others in your group ways that you have found to recapture joy in the face of hardship. What is your experience of the approaches Hays mentions in this chapter?

CHAPTER 4

Keep a list in your journal or day planner of poems, scripture passages, and other quotes taken from this book and other sources that help you to see God's joy in all things, places, people, and situations. Don't forget moments from your own life when you glimpsed this.

How does the notion of seeing God in destructive events, natural disasters, and personal suffering challenge your notion of God?

CHAPTER 5

The Hebrew scriptures contain the story of a peoples' experience of God. What would your own experiential testament look like? Consider writing it...

Do you try to resolve the "holy contradiction" of God's presence or absence in the evils of life?

CHAPTER 6

Imagine yourself with Jesus...You turn to face him and realize that he is smiling from ear to ear. What is it like? How do you respond? Now imagine him laughing heartily, perhaps watching the antics of some small joyous children...Rest awhile with this image and journal about it.

CHAPTER 7

Have you ever been to a foreign country, or perhaps to a part of the country different in culture than your own? Did anyone

smile at you? If so, how did it make you feel? If not, how would you have received a smile?

Experiment with smiling, particularly in situations when others are not expecting it; take note of the results.

CHAPTER 8

Draw some smiling or even laughing depictions of Mary and the saints.

Have you experienced a soul-coma? How did you rouse from it?

CHAPTER 9

Do you trust in the transformative power of God? Have you experienced this in your life? Share as much of your story as you are comfortable sharing with your group.

CHAPTER 11

What other physical acts, like a bow of the head, are professions of faith? How so?

CHAPTER 12

Complete joy—what does or will this look like for the inheritors of the legacy of Christ?

CHAPTER 14 & 15

The act of singing has mood lifting qualities, and Hays tells us a hope-filled song sung in a time of despair can turn moods around. But can a melancholic song be cathartic, brightening our mood as well? Discuss this with your group.

CHAPTER 16

Happiness surveys show that joy in the present is based in hope for the future, specifically economic future. What practices can you cultivate to base joy in your present contentment?

CHAPTER 17

How radical is the idea of Jesus experiencing joy as he was dying?

What do your habits say about you? How do they identify you?

CHAPTER 18

For those of us who respond to the baptismal call to be prophetic, how do others respond when we do so with joy and compassion instead of anger and righteous indignation?

CHAPTER 19

This reflection revisits the role of choice in living a joy-filled life. What deliberate, freely made choices can you make on the path to living a joy-filled life?



CHAPTER 20

Reflect on and discuss the numerous questions about the place (or lack thereof) of joy in religion.

CHAPTER 22

How do you tap into that divine hilarity of Jesus?

CHAPTER 23-24

Do you feel as comfortable complaining to God as you do to your friends and acquaintances? What happens when you offer prayers of complaint?

What joy comes from honest prayer of sorrow or complaint directed to God? What is your experience of this creative, honest engagement with God?

CHAPTER 25

Recall a time when you have experienced difficulties with the church in general, your particular parish, or some representative of the church. How did you respond? What would a joyful complaint look like?

CHAPTER 27

Hays presents us with another paradox, a recurrent theme in this series of reflections. Here, we are implored to balance mourning and rejoicing. How do you wrestle with this paradox? How do you hold these two opposites in creative tension?

CHAPTER 28

Joy seems to come more easily for some than others, who by nature are optimistic. But what about pessimists? Must they experience an intense mystical experience to become more joyous? What kind of conversion experience is necessary for them (or you) to live more joy-filled?

CHAPTER 29

Do you fear being laughed at? How does laughing at yourself bring you closer to the divine? Have you recognized this and experienced it?

CHAPTER 31

How does a difficulty in your work life affect your home life, and vice versa? Do you attempt to keep those parts of you separate?

CHAPTER 33

Ed Hays is a master of parable in his own right (see some of his other works such as *Twelve and One Half Keys* or *St. George and the Dragon*). Share one of your favorite parables with your group, or create your own story to tell an essential truth. Look for a connection to the joy that comes from God in the parables that are shared. Does looking at them in light of the reflections in this book cause you to see an aspect of a parable (or perhaps a favorite scripture passage) in a new way?

CHAPTER 34

What kind of a laugh do you have? How often do you share it with others? Do you ever laugh in prayer?

In what ways do you experience mystical communion with the Divine? Practice Merry Communion and observe what happens.

CHAPTER 37

In this reflection we see how fear inhibits joy. When you respond in fear, you cannot respond in joy. What other responses to challenging situations keep you from responding in joy?

CHAPTER 38

Hays says that you can live joyfully “when you have awakened to who you really are.” So, who are you at the core of your being, right here and now in your present circumstances?

CHAPTER 40

What is your personal view of the afterlife? How did you come to that way of thinking? How does your view compare with that presented in this reflection?

What is your initial reaction to the idea of living in joy as a free choice available to all?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edward Hays, a Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Kansas City, is the co-founder and a moving spirit of Forest of Peace Publishing. He is the author of over thirty best-selling books on contemporary spirituality. Many bear his own art. He has also served as director of Shantivanam, a Midwest center for contemplative prayer, and as a chaplain of the state penitentiary in Lansing, Kansas. He has spent extended periods of pilgrimage in the Near East, the Holy Land, and India. He continues his ministry as a prolific writer and painter.

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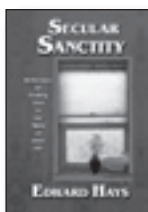
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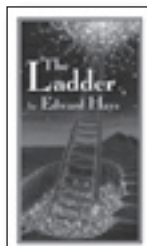
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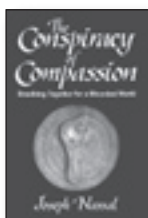


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