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- *The importance of sharing joyful times*
- *Embracing the foe*
- *Faith compared to crossing a bridge in fog*

Dear beloved spirits, your guides are all assembled, for all share their commitment to your growth, to your illumination, to your capacity to be even more loving. Although we do not see you specifically as physical beings, but we see your spirits, we are aware when you express yourselves through laughter and warmth, for such shared joy is the voice of spirit. It is the voice of love. It is the voice of inclusiveness at all levels.

Oh, how we wish it were possible for all human beings to regularly experience laughter. The joy of laughter is not superficial. It is a deep emotion that comes directly from what is within, for real laughter, real joy, is never feigned; it is always honest.

Sharing joy and laughter together is a window to the honesty that is far more open than what is all too frequently experienced, for you go through your lives so often with a kind of protective shield. Human beings seem always on the lookout for what might be threatening, what might generate fear, what might generate pain, what might generate embarrassment or anger. As a result, relationships are often characterized by what they are not rather than by what they are. Sharing joyful times unabashedly, sharing in the pleasures and joys of others, is such a unique expression, for you are not being defensive. You are not being guarded by a kind of barrier between you and those around you.

We spoke last time of the importance of each hue, each color, as it contributes to the totality of the pure light that is the Spirit Center, that is God. But the question arose and continues to be posed: Knowing the importance of embracing all, how is this done when you find yourselves in a position of great disagreement? Can you embrace, so to speak, that individual with whom you have seemingly irreconcilable differences? Can you embrace a philosophy that is directly opposed to your perspective of life? Can you embrace that force that is the source of pain and suffering? How do you cross that bridge? Even when you know it is a bridge for you to cross, how do you reach the other side? How do you reach the middle? How do you reach that point when you can find grounds to embrace?

All of this begins obviously with a single step. The journey across the bridge to embrace the foe is a series of many small steps. When you commit to the journey, you commit essentially to the act of taking successive steps that you have faith will carry you to your destination. You cannot be expected to feel completely relaxed and open and accepting towards a person or a viewpoint that you find totally opposed to your perspective. It is not God's intention that you quickly break down the barriers and embrace what you find offensive, but rather that you look where you wish the

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relationship to be and make some gesture on your part that represents the direction you wish to pursue. If you commit to the importance of that first step and the reality that it can lead toward what you seek, then you are willing to take the next and the next and the next. Each step must be approached with a desire to connect, with a desire to find what unites, and not to define what divides.

As you journey toward this reconciliation of sorts, your view of the goal becomes clearer. If you are approaching a bridge on a foggy day, you know the direction of the bridge. You can see a portion of it stretched out before you, but you do not necessarily clearly see the furthest edge. But knowing the bridge is there, you are willing to take that step. Each step carries you closer toward your goal, and slowly the goal comes into view. Even though the day remains equally foggy, even though the weather may close in from time to time, you do know you are approaching the goal that may be unseen but felt.

There is much in your society and in societies around the world that serves to step in the way and say, "Stop! Don't take another step. There is no point. The bridge ends with the fog." You can choose to heed that advice, or you can choose to proceed toward what you know to be a worthy goal.

Each of you in your lives is being asked to take steps. Some of those steps are taken with a reasonable confidence. Other steps are taken with fear, but it is nevertheless evident that there is a necessity to at least move away from where you are. There is no journey of steps that is absent of meaning when the goal is equality, when the goal is an acknowledgment of mutual worth, of mutual value. You can only move forward with a heart that is open, with a willingness to accept what is good and an unwillingness to accept what seems not to be good.

You are asked to be open, just as you are when you share laughter. The laughter is not a denial that suffering exists, but it is an affirmation of the openness that is possible between two or more people. It is an openness without judgment. It is an openness without measure. It is a spontaneous sharing of the joy that comes from a love toward another.

So it is with the same acknowledgment of challenges that are around you and yet the willingness to be open that you approach each step toward what you seek to be essential to life. When you are filled with concerns or worries, you may not see the end of the bridge, but you know the direction of that bridge. You know the direction that is open to you to grasp what is good in life. Accept the challenges but acknowledge achievements. Accept those characteristics you find in others that are different from what you perceive as godly, and yet continue to move along the path in faith that the path will lead you where you must go.

You're being asked, in a sense, to live by faith. Faith is not full vision of the other side of the bridge. Faith is merely the belief that that bridge is the path, whatever the condition of that bridge. You choose to follow it because it is directed toward where you

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perceive your own goals. You pursue because you believe in the direction, not because you see the goal. Faith in life is indeed faith in the appropriateness of life's journey. It is not a clear vision of life's outcome. You are strengthened when you proceed in such faith, for if you were to cross the bridge and the view were clear, there would be no challenge to placing one foot in front of the other. You'd merely follow the path with little thought and little growth.

Faith that characterizes a loving life is a faith that takes you on a journey where the goal is unclear but the sense of appropriateness remains. That is all you know about your own lives. You don't know the conclusion of your journeys, but you do know the direction of your lives. If you have faith in the rightness of your path because it is illuminated in love, then you can be assured of the rightness of the bridge regardless of the extent of its span.

Your challenges to meet the resistance you sometimes feel that others express are merely wisps of fog. If you are dedicating your lives to being loving and inclusive and affirming, then you will know that the direction of your path is appropriate. If you accept the appropriateness of that path, you will have all reason to proceed in faith, even though you don't see its conclusion. Human life is not about certainty. It is about how you approach uncertainty. Growth of any value is not in the observation of certainty but in the confronting of its uncertainty.

You cannot expect your lives to be enshrouded in perfection, filled only with warmth, filled only with clear vision, for such a life remains entangled and has few opportunities to expand. You are therefore asked to acknowledge your own challenges, be they philosophical, social, issues of health, whatever, to accept those as part of what it means to break away and to develop yourselves in the most meaningful possible ways.

God is all-powerful, but God also provides insight into how you can accommodate that which is uncertain in your lives. It is through God that you draw the strength necessary to pursue what to many may seem pointless goals, impossible of succeeding. You pursue because you believe. You believe because you have faith. You have faith because you cannot see the final outcome of that which you seek.

Allow moments in your lives when you are spontaneously open to others, for it is in those moments that you are spontaneously open to God's presence. You are open to what is good. You are open to what is joyful. You are open to all those around you. You are open to the spiritual connection that unites you, and you are open to a view of a bridge partially hidden by the fog. The fog has its beauty. It is not just an obstruction of your view. It is a beauty that can enhance the journey that begins with that first step.

The challenges you face from others, from yourself, can also serve as something beautiful. Take in those challenges, accept the fog, treat those seeming obstructions to what you seek as ways affirming your resolve of one step, another step, followed by yet another step. With each step you are stronger. With each step your view of what you

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seek will gradually be clearer, and your faith and your courage to be faithful will find great reward.

Enjoy the laughter. Enjoy the voice of the spirit. Enjoy the spontaneous expression of the spirit of another, and when you are faced with periods of sadness and concern, remember the joy. Remember the beauty of being open. Remember the vision that is provided when you open the eyes of spirit.

You are blessed as you share what is painful. You are blessed when you share what brings great joy. You are blessed when you cry. You are blessed when you laugh. Acknowledge those blessings of unguarded openness, and seek more opportunities for breaking down the barriers that prevent that openness from being expressed. Seek out opportunities to be who you really are, to express how you really feel. Seek out opportunities to hear when others express from the very center of their spirit, and realize at those moments that is the common bond that unites all of you.

We bless you with that bond. We bless you with the window of openness to spirit. We bless you with incredibly brilliant loving light that is the assembly of all spirit. Rejoice in the light! Rejoice in the sharing!

Amen.