
THE LIGHT

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LAUGHTER AND GENEROSITY

As many of you know, I love to laugh. I read the comic page every morning to start my day. I like to tell corny jokes. I believe that to laugh is to draw closer to God, for the Apostle Paul says, "The kingdom of God is not food or drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17)."

So imagine my delight when I read the following article by Mark Charles, a father who blends his Navajo heritage with his Christian faith.

The joyful heart is a generous heart.



The generous heart is a joyful heart.

The first laugh of a Navajo child (usually at about 3 months) is a very significant event. It marks the child's final passing from the spirit world to the physical world, meaning he or she is now fully human and present with us. This milestone warrants a party, and what a party it is!

The honor of throwing this party, including covering the expenses, falls to the person who made the child laugh first—a parent or someone else. That person takes charge of butchering sheep, preparing food, gathering rock salt, putting candy and gifts into bags, and inviting friends from near and far.

Once a baby has laughed, training in generosity begins immediately—a value our people hold in high regard. At the party, where the baby is considered the host, the parents or person responsible for the first laugh help hold the baby's hand as he or she

ceremonially gives the rock salt, food, and gifts to each guest. The rock salt is eaten immediately, and then the plate is received. There are also bags of candy, money, and other presents that the child "gives" along with the food.

(Source - <http://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/a-laughing-party/>)

The Navajos understand that to be fully human is not only to laugh, but also to be generous. The child will never remember her "laughing party", but as she grows older she will attend many other such parties. Her parents will tell her all about the party they held when she was a baby, and someday, if she is fortunate, she will make some baby laugh and will have the honor of paying for a new party. In all of these life events she will come to know that laughter and generosity belong together. For the joyful heart is a generous heart and the generous heart is a joyful heart. It's like a circle dance that goes on and on until it spills out into the lives of those around us, catching them up into the dance.

In Christ's love,

Pastor Mike