

The Vintage Voice

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Linking For Life and Beyond

The Rev. Dr. Joe Ted Miller

I just noticed that our computer monitor is stamped “low radiation.” Never noticed that over all these years of using it! In a roundabout way, too much of life before and after retirement is like that. Too many people, including myself, often give off low radiation. We don't “radiate” high interest in others and in life itself. No wonder I see so many retirees with long faces, sitting or walking in the mall. Since retirement, I have been the part-time “day care” for our first and only grandson since his birth. In fact, we were all there as he came into this world and into my life in particular. He was just what I needed to make the transition from a very pastoral and community-involved ministry to one of family involvement.

Since I was retiring in the same home we had been living in and the community where I had served for twenty-one years, I knew it was best for me to keep a low profile for a few years during the time of the parish's transition through interim to a new rector. I also had to give my body a chance to work on remission from my recently diagnosed leukemia and peripheral neuropathy. I spent two half days and one full day a week with my grandson while my wife continued her career job. I changed diapers, rocked, fed, and took walks with my little one until he began to walk. Now we link up with everyone we see in our visits to the park, mall, library or the bookstore named Tiny Tot Train Corner. People notice him as he radiates smiles and “hi's” and “bye's” and a few words in between in his just-turned-two vocabulary. We drop in on a few nursing or retirement homes where he is the center of attention. His high radiation links all who see him to life once again.

I find myself amazed at what I observe about child development, all that I must have missed in my busy life before, although I felt I was being a good and present father to our four. I try to give his parents the best of both worlds so my daughter can keep up with her career as a dietician and still be home the rest of the time, while I get this quality time of linking up with the developing life of our grandson. A little brother for Braden has arrived recently and not only has the diapering doubled but so has the radiating.

When I carry little Braden around his home, pointing out pictures and things as I have done since his infancy, I reflect on how that “pointing out” is what one generation can do for another.

It's a way of radiating our interest in the goings-on of life in us and around us. I can't wait until he can speak in sentences so I can know more clearly what's going on in him. I also hope he will still want to listen to me share with him what I see in me, in him and in the world out there. I hope he will become more and more linked up with what is outside him as a way of linking up with his growing notion of his own self. Isn't that what I was supposed to be doing in the pulpit and in ministry all through those many Sundays? It is only through my own linking up with life that I can sense a link with that which is beyond life as I understand and experience it.

I have always sensed the intense radiation of "the more" of life that seemed to come from deep within or the deep beyond that was yet in my midst. From earliest days, I recall lying on my back in a field, looking up into the sky and wondering how God is there and yet also here for me. It is only in my later days that I sensed that the God within me was perhaps even stronger than the God beyond me. I love to read how others speak of God even as I enjoy talking with others about our mutual reflections on humankind's search for God. As little Braden and I join hands in prayer daily, we look up to see God in the sky and in our heart and to often take "time outs" to consider the effectiveness of our behavior in this mean-time of our lives. No matter how intricate the words of the linguistic analysts and the behavioral synthesists, the out of the heavens and down to earth meaning of our words and deeds must radiate engagingly to link us with our neighbors near and far. The word becomes flesh that we might become more and more like the word. The God we seek is always as near as our neighbor and therein we discover the neighborliness of God. Where two or three are gathered in search for the name, there the one is in their midst. My prayer is that we can continue to learn from one another how to link up all the more. We must be interested and show interest in ever more of the truth lived only in part by each of us. Only then will there no longer be the danger of "low radiation."



The Rev. Dr. Joe Ted Miller was born in Oklahoma and after serving in churches in Larchmont, NY, Memphis, TN, and twenty-one years in Norman, OK, he now lives there in early retirement due to CML leukemia (in remission) and CMT inherited peripheral neuropathy for which he works out five days a week. He and his wife, Estelle, have four children and two grandchildren. His interests include intercultural reading, Muslim-Western dialogue, science and religion issues, grandchildren growth and development, Jesus-hidden and revealed. Retirement pursuits include flower gardening, reading, writing, following his children's careers and life, and visiting with whomever he meets along the way.