

May Monthly Theme: Humor

Mark Twain, a king of American humor, wrote, “Humor is the great thing. The minute it crops up, all our hardnesses yield, all our irritations and resentments flit away.” What power humor can have! Humor can play a significant role not only in smoothing tension between people, but also in resetting our own internal mood. Laughter can be serious spiritual medicine that restores our spirits. Yet, humor that is misplaced or mistimed can also wound deeply. What is this power that humor can wield? As we reflect on humor this month, let us consider the ways we can delight in the restorative gifts of humor and laughter as well as be mindful of why humor sometimes goes awry.

Questions for Discussion and Discernment

on your own, in small groups, or informally with each other:

- What is humor? What makes something funny?
- In what moments can humor help? Hurt?
- Name a time when humor smoothed over a difficult situation.
- How is humor related to laughter?
- Is a sense of humor important? Why?
- Can you describe a time when you belly-laughed?

Quotes and Short Readings:

- ~ “A sense of humor is just common sense dancing.” – [William James](#)
- ~ “If we couldn't laugh we would all go insane.” – [Robert Frost](#)
- ~ “Laughter is wine for the soul - laughter soft, or loud and deep, tinged through with seriousness - the hilarious declaration made by man that life is worth living.” – [Seán O'Casey](#)
- ~ “A sense of humor is essentially a sense of perspective. It is an understanding that comes from a true sense of proportion. Humor is not a matter of laughing at things, but of understanding them. At its highest it is a part of understanding life. It is an ability to see ourselves as we are, and to smile at the comic figure that the biggest of us cuts in strutting across life's stage.” – [Nivard Kinsella, *Unprofitable Servants: Conferences on Humility*](#)
- ~ “The earth laughs in flowers.” – [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#)
- ~ “There is a thin line that separates laughter and pain, comedy and tragedy, humor and hurt.” [Erma Bombeck](#)
- ~ “Not being funny doesn't make you a bad person. Not having a sense of humor does.” – [David Rakoff, *Fraud: Essays*](#)
- ~ “Sometimes the only way to deal with the horrific things in life is through a dark sense of humor.” –Margaret Cho

- ~ "If I had no sense of humor, I would long ago have committed suicide." –Mahatma Gandhi
- ~ "Imagination was given to man to compensate him for what he is not; a sense of humor to console him for what he is." –Francis Bacon
- ~ "A tragedy is a tragedy, and at the bottom, all tragedies are stupid. Give me a choice and I'll take *A Midsummer Night's Dream* over *Hamlet* every time. Any fool with steady hands and a working set of lungs can build up a house of cards and then blow it down, but it takes a genius to make people laugh." – [Stephen King](#)
- ~ "Life doesn't make any sense, and we all pretend it does. Comedy's job is to point out that it doesn't make sense, and that it doesn't make much difference anyway." – [Eric Idle](#)
- ~ "I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge. That myth is more potent than history. That dreams are more powerful than facts. That hope always triumphs over experience. That laughter is the only cure for grief. And I believe that love is stronger than death." – [Robert Fulghum, All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten](#)
- ~ "I love people who make me laugh. I honestly think it's the thing I like most, to laugh. It cures a multitude of ills. It's probably the most important thing in a person." – [Audrey Hepburn](#)
- ~ "I don't trust anyone who doesn't laugh." – [Maya Angelou](#)
- ~ "Laughter is the language of the soul." – [Pablo Neruda](#)
- ~ "There is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humor." – [Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol](#)
- ~ "Laughter is sunshine, it chases winter from the human face." – [Victor Hugo, Les Misérables](#)
- ~ "Senses of humor define people, as factions, deeper rooted than religious or political opinions. When carrying out everyday tasks, opinions are rather easy to set aside, but those whom a person shares a sense of humor with are his closest friends. They are always there to make the biggest influence." – [Criss Jami, Killosophy](#)
- ~ "A sense of humor is the best indicator that you will recover; it is often the best indicator that people will love you. Sustain that and you have hope." – [Andrew Solomon, The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression](#)
- ~ "It stands to reason that anyone who learns to live well will die well. The skills are the same: being present in the moment, and humble, and brave, and keeping a sense of humor. (361)" – [Victoria Moran, Younger by the Day: 365 Ways to Rejuvenate Your Body and Revitalize Your Spirit](#)
- ~ "It is the test of a good religion whether you can joke about it." – [G.K. Chesterton](#)