

April 2022

# Evergreen News

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## **Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.**

This morning the winds howled outside, snow and rain crashed against the windows, and I woke up thinking of a story told to me years ago.

The story took place on a farm in early April. The farm animals were scattered through acres of fields when an end of season snowstorm came in fast. Skies darkened, snow fell. Four inches, 8 inches, and it kept coming. The kids and their parents had gone into the fields to bring in as many of the livestock to the barn as possible. By the time most were safely in, the snow was falling so hard that the barn and house couldn't be seen. Mom and two daughters were in the barn getting the animals settled. Two sons were still somewhere in the field, and the dad had gone looking for them. The boys later told of how they found a fence and followed it until they felt the familiar gate, which is where Dad found them. Dad had tied a rope around himself and each of the boys so they wouldn't get separated, and they slowly made their way in the direction of the barn. They were guided by occasional sounds from the barn that weren't blown away by the wind. When safely together, the family each held onto a rope with Mom in the lead and Dad at the back making sure no one got lost. Offering encouraging words and their presence, the parents eventually got the family safely back to the house where they waited for the storm to end.

When going through hard times, or simply just going through life, none of us can do it alone. The good news is that we don't have to. We have God.... who promises always to be present with us. Like the parents in the snowstorm, God stays with us in all situations. We are God's beloved sons and daughters, part of God's family. God promises to be our refuge, shelter, and encourager. We can thrive in life because God is WITH us and God is FOR us.

As you go through each day this month, spend some time simply focusing on God's presence. And remember that "the One who goes ahead of you, opening up the way, is the same One who stays close and never lets go of your hand."

Chaplain Karen

## Party Time

April 3 is World Party Day, which provides humankind with an opportunity to coordinate our efforts to throw a worldwide simultaneous celebration. The idea of a global celebration originated in the book *Flight*, by Vanna Bonta, which ends with the entire world counting down to a worldwide party on April 3, 2000. Readers were so inspired by her vision that they could not wait until the year 2000. Instead, they organized the first World Party Day on April 3, 1996.

What is it about humans and their need to throw a good party? Anthropologist and evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar believes that partying is a primal human instinct that we have been compelled to satisfy for millennia. What sets the human species apart from other animals is its massive brain volume. Evolutionarily speaking, our large brains demand lots of attention. Brains require a massive amount of energy, and so we need to fuel them with food. Once they are fueled, our brains allow us to manage incredible social complexities and build massive social communities. Mr. Dunbar argues that as group size increases, it becomes harder and harder to establish and maintain social cohesion and relationships. Partying is our species' unique solution to this problem.

Social practices associated with parties—eating, laughter, singing, and dancing—stimulate the release of endorphins in our brains, reinforcing good feelings and promoting community. Dunbar even goes as far as suggesting that music and dancing in particular are still more likely to take place in the evening, corresponding to another instinctual drive to gather, sing, and dance around fires.

As a species primed and ready to party, World Party Day on April 3 seems like a no-brainer. With a variety of social media applications ready to spread communication across the globe in mere seconds, all it takes is the click of a button to send out an invite to the world.



## Supersized Circus Act

April 9 is Jumbo Day, commemorating the arrival of Jumbo the Elephant in the United States in 1882. Jumbo the Elephant had thrilled audiences for years in London's Zoo. When circus promoters P.T. Barnum and James Bailey saw the elephant act, they knew that Jumbo would make their circus an even greater show on Earth. Jumbo's arrival by boat in New York City on April 9 drew massive crowds. The *New York Times* even put Jumbo on the front page.

Barnum and Bailey's gamble paid off. Buying and transporting Jumbo had cost \$30,000 (\$800,000 in today's dollars). With Jumbo now headlining their circus, they more than recouped that cost in the first two weeks of ticket sales. Jumbo became a national phenomenon, and his popularity spawned a new word. The word *jumbo* came to mean something "extremely large in size." Today, we commonly use it when we say *jumbo jet*, *jumbotron*, or anything else super-sized.

## Flying Fish



The Flora-Bama Lounge is found on a sandy stretch of beach straddling Orange Beach, Alabama, and Perdido Key, Florida. At the end of April each year since 1986, thousands have flocked to the state line for the world-renowned Interstate Mullet Toss. No, these athletes aren't chucking bad '80s haircuts (although plenty of attendees arrive sporting mullets or wearing mullet wigs). These *mullets* are common tropical fish found in the Gulf Coast waters. Inconceivably, the fish toss spans three whole days, from Friday to Sunday on April 22 to 24, for six hours each day, for throwers of all ages. The beach party is all for a good cause, and each year the Mullet Toss raises \$20,000 for local charities. A record-shattering toss of 189 feet, eight inches was set in 2018.

## Exodus from Egypt

One of the most sacred holidays of the Jewish calendar, Passover, or *Pesach* in Hebrew, begins on April 15. It commemorates the Israelites' exodus from slavery in Egypt.



The story of Passover begins with Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob. Facing famine in Canaan, Joseph brought his people to Egypt. The Egyptian pharaoh, however, forced them into slavery and ordered all firstborn sons drowned in the Nile River. One such son, Moses, was sent downriver in a basket and was found by the pharaoh's daughter. He was adopted and raised by the Egyptian royal family. Upon discovering his true identity, Moses killed an Egyptian slave master in retribution for the brutal treatment of the Israelites. He escaped into the desert and lived in hiding for 40 years until one day God, in the form of a burning bush, told him to return to Egypt and free his people.

Time and time again, Moses pled with the pharaoh to free the Israelites. Each time the pharaoh refused, God unleashed a plague upon the Egyptians: flies, locusts, frogs, boils, pestilence, lice, turning water to blood, hail, and darkness. The final plague was the slaying of every firstborn son by an angel of death. The Israelites marked their doorframes to indicate that death should "pass over" that home. When the Egyptians awoke to find their sons dead, they beseeched the pharaoh to let Moses lead the Israelites out of Egypt. After initially agreeing to the plea, the pharaoh reneged on his promise and sent his armies after Moses. Miraculously, God parted the Red Sea, allowing safe passage to the Israelites and drowning the pharaoh's men. After 40 years, the Israelites at last reached the promised land of Canaan.

The Passover seder is the ritual meal that commemorates the Exodus. The book of Exodus commands Jews to retell the story: "You shall tell your child on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.'" And so it has been done on Passover for centuries.

## The Ballad of Casey Jones

The name Casey Jones echoes in the American imagination alongside the names of Johnny Appleseed and John Henry. In 1891, Jones achieved his lifelong goal of becoming an expert locomotive engineer. He was known to be so punctual with his arrival times that you could set your watch by him. Jones was also an expert with the train whistle. His signature calls let everyone within hearing distance know that it was Casey Jones riding by. He was even known as a hero, once saving a girl stuck on the tracks from an oncoming train. But Jones is most famous for his fatal run on April 30, 1900.

Casey took the controls of a train already 75 minutes behind schedule. Ideal weather and rail conditions, as well as a top-notch crew, pushed Jones to make a record-setting pace from Memphis, Tennessee, to Canton, Mississippi. Records show that Jones was on track to erase the 75-minute deficit, but in Vaughn, Mississippi, a massive freight train had stopped with cars on the main track. When Casey came bearing down on the cars, he let loose the whistle, shouted to his fireman to leap to safety, and slammed the brakes. It was too late. The collision demolished the freight cars and Jones, but his actions saved everyone else on board. Casey Jones has been remembered as a hero ever since.

## Cracking the Market



Indulge in some childhood nostalgia on April 18 by dipping into a box of animal crackers, for it's Animal Crackers Day! The first animal crackers were produced in England, but they were so popular that American bakers at Stauffer's Biscuit Company took notice and began to make their own in 1871. But in 1902, using marketing savvy that P.T. Barnum would be proud of, the National Biscuit Company, Nabisco, sold its crackers in a box designed to look like a circus train car. The Christmas-issue boxes even came with a thin string so they could be hung on a Christmas tree.

## We Need a Hero



April 28 is Superhero Day. Are you shocked that such a holiday exists? After all, American pop culture has been overrun by superheroes largely thanks to the competing Marvel and DC comic movie franchises. It seems we cannot go a few weeks without hearing about another movie starring characters like Iron Man, Captain America, Spider-Man, Superman, Batman, or Wonder Woman. However, America is not alone in its obsession with superheroes.

India's Bollywood cinema struck superhero gold when they introduced *Mr. India* to the masses. When a mild-mannered music teacher who cares for orphans in his home stumbles upon a magical watch, he finds that he can become invisible. With his newfound power, Mr. India saves the entire country from a ruthless general who wants to destroy the country and its people.

You might forgive Americans for thinking that Canada's Captain Canuck is just a knock-off of Captain America. But Canada's first national superhero, who made her debut in 1941, was Nelvana of the Northern Lights. Daughter of an Inuit woman and the god King of the Northern Lights, Nelvana is able to fly at the speed of light along the northern lights, as well as manifest the superpowers of her father. Marvel eventually created a superheroine of its own, Snowbird, who is the daughter of Canada's Nelvana.

If superheroes are supposed to be superhuman, Spain's Pafman breaks that convention. Pafman is a clumsy oaf. He and his cat, Pafcat, battle ridiculous foes such as a talking chair with wit, slapstick, and satire, although the world would probably be better off without their help.

Why do humans, regardless of country or culture, love superheroes? Some psychologists believe they provide humans with an appealing fantasy—these godlike beings carefully put a chaotic world back in order. In many ways, superheroes reflect our shared human natures, our notions of power and morality— notions shared across national, political, and cultural boundaries.

## April Birthdays

### Staff:

Tucker – April 27<sup>th</sup>

Hailey – April 29<sup>th</sup>



## Nepali New Year



Nepal's festival of Bisket Jatra coincides with the solar new year on April 14 and dates back to the Licchavi kingdom, which dominated the Kathmandu Valley from 400–750 AD. This ancient holiday begins with the symbolic slaying of the snakes. An old legend recounts how a cursed princess repeatedly killed her bridegrooms when she inadvertently summoned vicious snakes to their marriage bed. One groom, summoning divine power, killed the snakes, freeing the princess from her curse. The festival culminates with the pulling of two massive chariots, known as *raths*, which haul two gods, Bhairav and Bhadrakali, god and goddess of creation and destruction. Residents from the city's upper and lower quarters of the city engage in a tug-of-war with the chariots, and the winners bring the raths to their quarter. As in many new years' celebrations, the festivities represent a renewal of life.