

## The Wild Joy of Drumming

There's nothing like eighty men drumming like crazy in the desert. It's the unnerving sound of thunder and memory of the mother's heartbeat, summoning the male soul from the depths.

We've grown up on the music of the drum: Ringo Starr of the Beatles, Mickey Hart of the Grateful Dead, John Bonham of Led Zeppelin—calling us to something wild and free. “*Give me the beat, boys, and free my soul. I wanna to get lost in your rock and roll...and drift away!*” Initiation rites take us back to that, recovering still deeper roots in the power of the Spirit to generate a pure delight in life itself.

I know little about drumming, but I have a heart for it. I listen to what the drum wants to say, how it wants to sing. It's a little like making love. Your hands move *with* the drum, not against it. You give yourself to it. And when the madness comes—when the rhythm builds and eighty guys are whooping it up with huge smiles breaking out on their faces, with drumsticks flying and men in awe at what they're a part of—you know what it means to be alive.

There's a boisterous, even prodigal quality about drumming. It gives expression to an excess of unstoppable wonder, to what the saints couldn't put into words in describing their experience of the divine. Some saints even went so far as to honor an excessive exuberance in anything, suggesting that “sins of excess” are God's favorites. That's why God loves addicts so much. They KNOW desire....and how to throw themselves into it! All they need do is turn that energy toward what's *most* worth desiring and see what servants of the Lord they'll make!

This encourages me, having recently committed a sin of excess myself. I was serving as Weaver for the Shadowlands Firming with the DC MALES. The team had borrowed a big drum for the occasion and we were going to town in our second session of drumming. But my makeshift drumsticks were thick wooden dowels with leather pads attached. As we wildly finished the set, the pads suddenly flew off but I ignored it, putting a hole in the drumhead on my very last beat.

I felt terrible. The next morning I was still beating up on myself when the team members had mercy on me and started laughing. They said it was a shame I'd broken a *borrowed* drum, one that belonged to a little girl suffering from an illness, one that was probably irreplaceable. They said the Illuman board would certainly have to be notified, with drumming probably no longer allowed in official events—at least not by people using two-by-fours. They went on and on. We laughed till we cried.

The drum got fixed, of course. And the drummer learned a lesson. But he won't give up the passion. Our work calls us, after all, to a joy that borders on the reckless. Irenaeus was right: The glory of God is human beings *fully alive*! The drum won't let us forget it.