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A Benefit for ACAP (Autistic Children's Activity Program)

SATURDAY OCT 26 @ 9PM

HALLOWEEN PARTY!

Cash and Prizes for Best Costumes!

UPCOMING EVENTS
check online for details

Jared & Jimmy's PJ/Underwear Party 10/18
A Celebration of the Rose 10/21
Halloween Party! 10/26
The Hooker' Ball 11/15
The Harvest Party! 11/29
CC's Christmas Party! 12/14
CC's New Years Eve '03 12/31

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Patrick Anderson
on the piano
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HUMOR

High anxiety

All stressed up and nowhere to blow

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARC
by Marc Acito



It's said that the Roman Empire was destroyed not by one attack but by "a thousand small cuts"—that the continual barrage of hostility from Barbarian armies eventually wore the empire down.

I know just how Rome felt. I don't handle stress well. Last year after the Twin Towers collapsed and some of my friends and family back east weren't accounted for, I coped in my usual time-honored way: I ate an entire half-gallon of ice cream. "It's World War III," I thought. "Screw the diet."

But it's the day-to-day hassles that really work my nerves. I'm partially responsible, of course. Working two jobs for the past five years has left me feeling overworked and underpaid. My personal to-do list looks something like this:

- Pick up last year's dry cleaning.
- Buy groceries.
- Never mind about the groceries. Be creative with remaining contents in fridge.
- Go to gym. Avoid eye contact with hostile straight guys.
- Fix broken lamp.
- Fix broken table.
- Fix broken promises.
- Write screenplay you can sell for obscene amounts of money to escape this mundane life.
- Wallow in doubt and self-pity.

And that's just before I get to work. It's no wonder I'm so cranky and impatient. The other day I found myself standing in front of the fax machine screaming: "For Chrissake, hurry up! I haven't got all minute!"

But I also blame my family. Not just because it's convenient and fun, but because I've inherited a genetic predisposition for anxiety, descending as I do from a long line of small, worried people. Consequently, anytime I get a headache I always think, "That's it, the cancer has eaten away at the bone, just like it did Debra Winger in *Shadowlands*."

I'm easily overwhelmed by the simplest aspects of everyday living, like using a cell phone, for instance. I finally had to stop wearing mine on my hip—not only did it spoil the line, but every time I put my seat belt on it speed-dialed my friend Tim (the poor soul who made the mistake of showing me how to set up speed dial in the first place).

So now I leave it in my car, which is fine, except I don't know how to retrieve my calls. My phone will say, "You have three unplayed messages," and I'll just think, "Hmm...bummer."

It's the same with computers. It took me the longest time just to realize there was no such thing as the "Any" key. And as far as I'm concerned, chatting online still means flirting with the bag boy at the grocery store.

But since my CPU insists on making a noise that sounds like a flock of pigeons, I have to enlist the

aid of more technologically advanced people (like anyone without a serious head injury). But they always end up showing me some feature I don't care about like how my monitor can be used as a microwave oven or as a means of contacting the dead.

Above all else, though, it's home ownership that pushes me over the edge. We have a very unhealthy relationship, my house and I. It's always coming to me with some problem or other ("I'm leaking, I'm rotting, blah, blah, blah"), and I'm always bailing it out by writing checks. I was just about to organize an intervention when my HVAC system started smelling like dead fish.

That was two years ago. Since then a changing cast of repair guys (some with butt cleavage, some without) have come out to fix the problem, but all they know for certain is that a fish did not crawl into my ductwork and die there. Meanwhile I'm convinced Floyd and I are going to develop leukemia from breathing tainted air. I'm ready to call Erin Brockovich.

It's endlessly frustrating to turn to experts for solutions only to discover they don't know what to do, but it did make me come to an important realization: Nobody really knows anything—not me, not the HVAC guys, not doctors or ministers or even Oprah. All we can do is guess.

Most of us woke up Sept. 11 thinking it would be just another day, maybe a really good one because the weather was so beautiful. Now every time an ambulance passes I think, "Right now someone is having the worst day of their lives." It's very humbling, and it proves you can never know what will happen.

So I've stopped trying to resolve every little inconvenience in my life, which means I probably won't get around to fixing my house until I try to sell it. But I figure with so much truly beyond my control, there's really nothing to be gained by worrying.

And that, my friends, is *The Gospel According to Marc*. ☐

MARC ACITO's column appears in a dozen papers nationwide. Write him at marcacito@attbi.com.



ILLUSTRATION BY KEVIN MOORE