

Open Faith means open to God, and life

Recently a good friend of mine, born and raised here in Reno, spent a week in Kansas. She went with her husband who had been raised in the midwest. As they were leaving I sent her a text telling her to look for lightning bugs (or fireflies). A couple of days later she texted back how excited she was to see them, as it was her first experience. The wonder of seeing those little lights, floating in the dusk. It is kind of magical, fairy-like.

Many years ago at our Priest retreat the speaker was a Jesuit Priest who was also a psychologist. This was a few years after the scandals of the early 2000's. He told us that every day we need to take an "amazement" break, 5 minutes or so. We need to get away from our desk and our office, go outside and be amazed at something. It is part of our building up resilience. I have used this technique in penances in confessions, telling people who were full of anger or sadness, who were having a difficult time with God, that they must go walk and look at the beauty of the earth, and recognize God at work.

A symptom of a societal/generational illness or ennui, especially among us Gen X'rs is sarcasm, cynicism, being snide; the 3's (yes i know cynicism begins with a c, but it's the sound). It is too easy for us anymore to become cynical or jaded in life and about life; too easy to live in our disappointments and anger and frustration; too easy to assume the worst. We only see badness; we only live in fear of the other. This just shuts down our minds, our hearts, our very souls. Sarcasm, cynicism do not allow us to see the wonders of our world; we fail to be moved by amazing things and events that happen. Life becomes gray.

The past several weeks in our gospels Jesus has been teaching about what faith can do! Faith, that trust in God's work, trust in God's love, opens us to healing and really to the fullness of life. Faith opens us to the work of God in our lives and in this world.

This week we get an opposite approach; what won't happen if we don't have faith, or too little. Jesus comes home; his own people can't imagine him as someone different from themselves. They have no wonder in them, no openness within them; they have blocked themselves off (symbolic

maybe of Israel's relationship with God). They are cynical about him. They also seem quite sarcastic. Jesus seems disappointed in his own kinfolk; sadness and a little anger maybe. And it says he could do only a few amazing things among them. No great wonders are done for the people.

Kids have wonderful imaginations! I get the best cards from them and I save them all. Kids are so open to wonder, to amazing things and open to God. It is fun to be around them and from the mouths of babes will come insights and wisdom. They take in so much, and can be amazed at stuff. Last week during VBS one young kid's take away was that baby Jesus was in the Tabernacle!

I think one of our treasures as Catholics are the amazing stories of faith handed down down to us. These amazing stories that modern people tend to dismiss as mere fairytales, or fake, because too many modern people have lost a sense of wonder; lost a sense of imagination.



In Bolensia Italy there is a church, the the Basilica of Santa Cristina. In 1263 a priest there was having doubts about the true presence in Communion. It was devastating to him and he was trying to reconcile it. Then during mass, as he held up the consecrated host it began to bleed, and he was so shook he dropped it onto the stone. A corporal (white cloth on the altar) was used to wipe the blood. The event was taken before the Pope who happened to be in the nearby city of Orvieto. This whole miraculous event led to the founding of the feast of Corpus Christi; and the corporal itself can be seen in Orvieto in the Cathedral.



Recently Carlos Acutis was named as a saint or will be official soon. This young boy died of leukemia in 2006. As a teen and young boy he was alive in his faith and made a website to record all these Eucharistic miracles. I don't think this is all about proof, but about opening up our hearts to amazement. I have also been to his tomb in Assisi; he is intact and in a glass coffin buried in his favorite track suit. Kind of amazing too.

These miracles are meant to open us to amazement. These wonderful stories from our Catholic history can evoke our sense of wonder, our sense of mystery of how God is at work in our lives and in our world. They can pry open our closed off minds, our overly pragmatic hearts, and begin to re-grow our sense of wonder.

Yet, don't rely on Eucharistic miracles alone. Talk with people who have faith; listen to their stories. They are amazing. People who have opened themselves to the wonder of God and endured illnesses and losses; struggled with decisions, struggled with addiction and have found life! People who walked with Jesus, trusted in God's love and God's promises of life. People who entered even into the darkness and walked through it into the arms of Christ. Listen to their stories or share your own stories of faith!

Jesus' own fame spread because people talked and shared stories of what he said and did. They shared their faith with each other.

And this is how the early church grew. People listened to the apostle share their faith; and listened to the growing disciples and their own openness to God grew. The Church grew because people opened themselves to new possibilities, a new reality of God's love and life.

We too can have our faith, our imaginations grown as we listen to each other's stories; and yes as we read of miracles from our tradition.

When we start to become disenchanted with our world, with our lives; as we become disheartened with our lives, which it seems never to get better... When we feel there is little hope, little light...

Stop and take an amazement break. Look around at the beauty, the goodness that exists. Reflect back on our stories, read some of the saints, listen to each other. Come to Mass our Eucharist and be engaged in the mystery that we celebrate.

Imagine how much God loves us and forgives us despite how low we may consider ourselves. And once we can imagine that, faith grows. And if we

can imagine that of ourselves then we can imagine that for others, and we can begin to love them, forgive them.

And that is true life, and that it amazing