

Lent is a Great Time to Reconnect with God

Last week at daily Mass on Monday February 8th and Tuesday, February 9th, we had the story of creation; of how out of nothing God creates everything. We hear this as well every time we get to the Easter Vigil.

I love the story of creation, because it reminds us of the vastness of God but also how much we are loved by God, too. The reading from Monday was paired with a reading from Mark 6, where Jesus cures people who aren't named, but encounter Him, some just touching the tassel of his cloak.

The readings that day made me think of some of the ways that I have encountered God over the years.

One is through nature. I shared at Mass that day a trip that caused me to really fall in love with photography. I headed to the Black Hills and Badlands of South Dakota alone about 12 years ago, recently getting some new digital camera equipment and wanting to get into the hobby again. On the trip, I climbed to Harney Peak in Custer State Park and saw beautiful scenery and clouds and ran into a woman who had just returned from Lourdes and sent me some water from the pool there in the mail; I visited Bear Butte State Park and saw beautiful rolling clouds over the mountain; and drove out to Devil's Tower one afternoon where the sun set behind me, and a deer stopped in front of my camera for about a second posing for me as I was the only one at the monument that afternoon. Falling in love with nature, I've had so many great experiences; watching bear and moose; seeing the stars come out over the mountains; seeing a breathtaking sunrise in the Canadian Rockies, and gazing into the incredible aqua thermal pools of Yellowstone National Park. The nature is beautiful, but for me these are very much retreat experiences too. I return recharged, but also my faith deepened because I experience God in these places.

However, I also find God in many other quiet moments too.

I've been blessed with two wonderful dogs in Kirby and now Emmett, who remind me of unconditional love.

I find God in the peacefulness of our church, sometimes praying in the empty sanctuary or sitting in silence as the sun shines through the stained glass.

I find God in the people who fill my life, from my parents to the great people I'm privileged to work with on staff and serve here at Saint Joe's.

I find God when I am praying in the stillness of the late evening or going for a walk with Emmett and looking at the clouds pass in the sky.

I find God in the silence of the sanctuary when I hold up the bread and wine and say the words of the Eucharistic prayer, reminded again of God's love for us all.

I find God in the peacefulness that comes from celebrating confession; both as a penitent, hearing that I am forgiven, and with people as I remind them of God's love for them as a confessor.

I find God in the many good things that happen day in and day out in our parish.

I imagine you find God in many ways too. Lent gives us a special time to deepen our relationship with God.

As we enter into this holy season, maybe you find yourself drained a bit. Drained from Covid. Drained from a long year. Drained from stress at home or with the job. Drained from people driving you crazy. Drained from so much negativity in the world.

As I shared at Mass, I can't run very long without breakfast. And just as I need food for the day ahead, I need to be recharged spiritually. So how is your spiritual tank? Make an effort this season to find times to get to know God better. Find some time for prayer, using whatever form works best for you. Consider some times for silence and meditation. Look for a good spiritual book. Think about going to confession. If you've been away from Mass due to Covid, consider trying to watch online. Go for a walk to clear your head and listen to God.

And with this too, we can also fill one another's spiritual tank by praying with them, especially as a family; by talking about our faith and explaining it; by being patient; and sometimes by just listening.

God is incredible; and I think about this when I gaze upon the many stars in the sky or the beauty of the mountains or photograph a bird He created that travels thousands of miles each year to and from Minnesota. But what is also incredible to me are how as Jesus says in Luke 12:7 that "even the hairs of your head are numbered" and that we are not to be afraid; for God knows us that well, and loves us that much. It's a love that we do not need to do anything to receive; but as God makes the first move to us, may we make the move to Him too to come to know Him deeper and deeper as life goes on.

So, who is God to you? Use this season to think about how much He loves you, but also to learn how to love Him more deeply as our lives go on.

Have a blessed week and start to your Lenten season,

Fr. Paul