

Grace Notes in Miniature

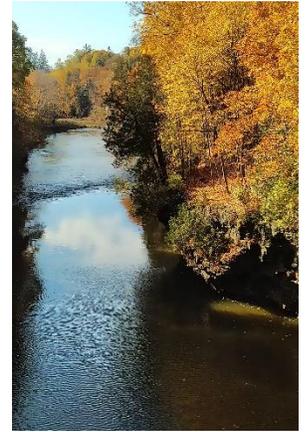
Friday, October 23rd, 2020

Dear Friends:

As I awakened to what appeared to be another dull day, I turned to some of my favourite psalms to lift my spirits.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-H4VcVfh94> and

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgFoPDyc8aI> I have become more and more appreciative of the psalms as I get older and to listen to them sung is indeed a gift. The next gift was the raising of the fog and the sun breaking through to reveal a brilliant blue sky. I then gave myself the gift of a ten-minute walk to the bridge in the small town where I live and found that it was warmer outside than it felt in my house! I took the above picture and returned feeling uplifted and able to get back to work with enthusiasm. There are a couple of lessons here: one is self-care – where I have trouble practising as I preach – and the other is taking time to enjoy the grandeur and beauty of God's creation. I've found that looking for ways to be grateful for even what may seem to be small things does raise me up.



I am currently taking a course in which we are examining faith and discussing the roles that we and God take in its development within us. A search for faith is evidenced in what we learn about people from the earliest times: human beings have sought the Creator in many ways and we are the recipients of God's self-revelation to us through the prophets, the Holy Scriptures, and ultimately through the gift of Jesus, God's Son. God brings us into being with an innate desire for relationship and St Augustine commented in his Confessions that "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and **our heart is restless until** it finds its rest in thee." (Lib 1,1-2,2,5,5: CSEL 33, 1-5)

We then receive the beginnings of the gift of faith from the Holy Spirit in our baptism and our parents or guardians are entrusted with nurturing the seeds of faith which have been planted. They then share part of that sacred trust with our schools – which, as we are told in "**Renewing the Promise**",

should be places where each one of us encounters Christ each day. At the time of confirmation, we take on more responsibility for our own growth in faith and this is often where we get bogged down. I have spoken with many adults who confess that they haven't done much to further their faith since they left school. I see it as being very much like trying to develop healthy regimens for diet and exercise – both of which take a bit of work and commitment. Our spiritual health also needs an appropriate diet and exercise and there is a much deeper benefit in making room for these in our lives. (And God is much more forgiving of the times we stumble!) We recall the man who cried to Jesus "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24) and know that our Father is there waiting to help us if we do our part in the relationship and reach out. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HcKr2WzB2BM>

I find the Psalms are great places to go for inspiration as they contain so much human emotion. They are often quite short or can be broken into manageable pieces. We may hear people crying out their anger, desperation, sorrow, feeling of abandonment and then, by the end of the Psalm, finding some resolution. I think of Psalm 22 in the Good Friday Liturgy: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? (Psalm 22:1). At the other end of the spectrum are psalms like Psalm 30: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abG-4ymxruY>

In the Gospel Reading this weekend, Jesus sums up the whole of the message of divine law and our relationship with God in the two commandments which are the greatest:

"...one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:35-40)

Let's do it!

Praying that we all enjoy a grace-filled weekend,

Gillian

