

Windows of Wonder

Here are a few examples to start you off!

Recently we were told a simple but profound story by a young mother. During the break at a local concert her daughter suddenly looked at her and whispered, 'Mammy, I don't think I've ever been happier in my whole life'. Such an ordinary remark in an ordinary place, yet it was a unique moment the mother will always treasure. It was God's joy in the little one speaking. It was God's delight in the mother listening. The love between them was the incarnate presence of God. That special moment was utterly human; and it was completely divine. Such moments last forever. That is what God looks like, the Christian believes. Why did sensitive parents shed a few tears at that simple story?

Another story from one of our 'Begin with the Heart' days. People were invited to bring some souvenir or object that carried a precious meaning for them. One participant brought her address-book with her. We asked her why. 'If all our relationships are sustained by divine energy; if all human loves are God's love incarnate; then', she said, 'my address book, which is a symbol of my love and friendship for all those in my life, must be a very special book, a kind of 'Gospel', a small sacrament of my life's relationships.'

A recent e-mail had this account of another 'disclosure' moment after one of these special days. 'When she was eleven her father died suddenly. After class one day a teacher asked her how she was – because she was looking tired. That was all! Yet that moment of love, from over 30 years ago, was still so fresh and significant in her mind. She had really needed to talk to someone who would listen, and this teacher's sensitivity and generosity with her time made such a huge difference. That moment has stayed with her and she now tries to show the same compassion to the children she teaches.'

That is the only way that God can reach us – through each other. 'I have no other voice of compassion but yours, no other ear but yours to listen forgivingly, no eye of love but yours . . .' said Jesus to St Teresa. That is why we talk about the sacrament of conversation, the sacrament of listening, the sacrament of presence.

A man spoke about how a remark from his Headteacher turned his life around. As a youth he was behaviourally disturbed, socially disabled. After a few disastrous episodes that led to his expulsion from the school, this Headteacher dropped him a note saying 'No matter what, I will never give up on you. Just remember not to let yourself down.' Years later, the boy, now a young man, went back to thank the teacher for saving his life. These human words were, in fact, eternal words of grace, God's love incarnate in our human condition.

There are millions of these moments happening around the world every day – happening in your community, in your family. All we have to do is keep our eyes open to the amazing mystery of the Incarnation, spotting all the expressions of a God who comes to us in the disguise of week-days, of our mutual needs, of human weakness, of opportunities to reach out towards each other. 'God comes to us,' someone said, 'disguised as our daily life'.

Many of the stories come from moments of a deep awareness of Presence in nature – some from childhood memories, others from every season of the years of their lives. Your story may well be from your young days, the first time you cried, felt hurt, fell in love, succeeded, failed. Or it may be from watching your child tying her ribbon or his shoe-laces or tie for the first time.

Many heartfelt stories began with the extreme experiences of missionaries in foreign lands. These are all revelations of God emerging throughout our lives in the most ordinary of ways, small sacraments of God's presence in ordinary achievements. And also in the relentless efforts of humanity to save our planet, to bring hope to God's people.

As already mentioned, this section of the website welcomes your accounts of such sacramental moments. You may have noticed them in a film you were watching, a poem you were reading, a piece of music that moved you, a painting that revealed something special to you, a play you saw, a country you worked in. Once you develop this deeper way of looking at things, a more attentive way of being present to everything and everyone, developing the habit of paying attention to the million things all around you as you walk and talk and look around you, then the miracles will keep happening more often than ever.

