

Pastoral Reflection
Second Sunday of Ordinary Time
January 16, 2022

A couple weeks ago while I was doing a routine visit on the cardiac floor at the hospital where I work as a chaplain, I had an unforgettable moment in an exchange of words with a patient. This was a young man who had already been in the hospital for several weeks, and who was facing even more weeks hospitalized, while having antibiotic treatment for an infection that had gone to his heart. In the middle of several questions that I was asking him about his well-being and sharing about pastoral care services, he stopped and said, "Can I ask you a question?" And then he asked me... "Are you always this happy?" This question was not at all what I expected, and both in the room with him and for many days later I poured over this query and have found myself contemplating this unexpected perception that was reflected back to me. He was able to share with me that in contrast to what he had been experiencing, he welcomed having someone visit who expressed interest in getting to know him, was trying to help identify his needs and who did not seem worn out. Whether my happiness stood out simply in contrast to others or was identified as my natural, usual state of being – having a stranger identify something that I was unaware I was exhibiting had me rejoicing in ways that God shows up in my own spirit, unexpectedly.

A theme that can be taken from today's readings is of God rejoicing in us and us, in turn, rejoicing in the glory of God. It can often be through the unexpected that God reveals God's glory to us. We are living in an unusual time. How at this time is God's glory being revealed to you? Is it easier for you to delight in God or to imagine God delighting in you? In the first reading we hear Isaiah speak of the land of Jerusalem as no longer being desolate or forsaken but delighted and rejoiced in, as well as called by a new name and held in God's own hand. Who among us is not longing right now to be taken from a time and place of desolation and in need of trusting God to move us into a place of rejoicing with others and with our God?

How might God's glory be revealed to us? Paul speaks of the manifestation of the Spirit being revealed by each of us through the gifts of the spirit. We are told that each of us is given an expression of the Spirit for "some benefit." At times we may trust that God's Spirit is alive in us and that we are given what we need to bring the Spirit of God to life in our world. Many times, though, we need help...we need others to help us to see what God is doing in our lives and where God's spirit might need to be nudged within us. "Happiness" is not listed as one of the gifts of the Spirit, but "healing" is, and I imagine that one of the reasons that gentleman's comment was so meaningful to me is that I could interpret that his experience of me being happy with him was healing. What experiences can you draw upon that help you identify the gifts of the Spirit within you (wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, mighty deeds, prophecy, discernment, variety of tongues, interpretation of tongues), in the myriad of ways they may be manifesting themselves in your lives?

In the Gospel, Jesus revealed his glory to the wedding guests at Cana by turning water into wine. The headwaiter has such great surprise that the good wine seemed to be reserved for later in the celebration, an unusual practice. Are we reserving our good wine, our spiritual gifts, for a particular time? Perhaps surprising others, ourselves, and God with the recognition and use of our gifts might be the best way for God to delight in us and for us to reveal and sing God's glory.

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