

Along the track

Soaked in Miracle

“To grow up Catholic is to be especially lucky as an artist because you are soaked in miracle and mystery and symbol and smoke and the confident assertion that every moment is pregnant with miracle and possibility and stuffed with holiness”

So wrote the late Brian Doyle, poet, award winning author, international speaker. He was an extraordinary ‘man of words’ with insights that graced our world during his short sixty years of life.

We don’t have to be an artist to allow faith to help us to see our lives with a richness and beauty, with possibility that is, well, miraculous. Do we ever think of those special verses in Scripture which remind us of the sheer miracle of life, the holiness of it all? “Consider how the lilies of the field grow,” Jesus said, “They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was adorned like one of these. (Mt 6:28).”

Jesus frequently used images from the natural world to remind us that we find the holy in the ordinariness of life, the familiar, the often taken-for-granted. He spoke of farming, fishing, vineyards and shepherds. As he walked from place to place he drew attention to the mustard seed, yeast, bread, sowing and seeds, vineyards and vines, new and old wine, sheep and goats, the good shepherd, the sheepfold, the flock, weeds among the wheat, fishermen, a net full of fish. For Jesus, all these are ‘soaked in miracle, mystery, stuffed with holiness’.

Jesus didn’t only tell us to look at the lilies or look up and see ‘the birds of the air’, He even reminded us about the messages contained in each sunset.

“When evening comes, you say, ‘The weather will be fair, for the sky is red;’ and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but not the signs of the times! Mtt 16 2-3

The ‘signs of the times’ meant trying to read what is happening in our lives in such a way as to discern God’s presence and purpose. In the business of our own lives, in the deluge of information we are bombarded with, it is easy to miss the pointers to God’s presence in our lives. If we do go looking, it can often be in the wrong places. Sometimes, like the Pharisees, we can ask for a sign, but seldom watch a sunset. We want proofs for the existence of God even as life in all its wonder, complexity and its simplicity unfolds all around us.

So much of Jesus’ time was spent doing the ordinary, the bulk of his life earning a living in his trade at Nazareth, for example. We didn’t hear much about him until he was over thirty. But then he showed us the power of a meal, how sacred it can be, how it can make a statement to those we love, about who we include, how a simple meal can be a vehicle of forgiveness and reconciliation, how it can be pregnant with miracle and possibility and stuffed with holiness. Jesus showed us that how going aside on our own at times can be soaked in closeness with God, how it can be a source of inspiration and comfort. He showed us what a simple gift of a cup of water, a visit to the sick, spending time with the lonely can be vehicles filled with the love and action of God. He showed us the importance of feeding people when they are hungry. He affirmed people often and encouraged people in their efforts to find meaning and purpose in their lives.

The power of faith to which the Spirit invites us urges us to *look at* things as if we have never seen them before, to seek out God who is hiding in plain sight. Jesus taught us that God can be found not locked away in the special places, not hiding behind a mass of complex languages and complex concepts, but that God is not out of reach, not absent from our homes and families or our joys and sadnesses, not absent from our pain and losses. If we go looking God is here with us, in us, and among us, in our homes and places of work, in our schools and hospitals, in the places where we go to find peace, in the landscape we walk through, in the beauty and wonder of creation around us. Especially our fellow human beings.

Regards
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