

“In the Spirit. In the Moment.”

In think probably every time I hear our gospel reading— which is the story of Jesus turning water into wine at a friend’s wedding in Cana of Galilee— I find myself thinking: “Wouldn’t it be great if Jesus could be at all of our parties? There would always be plenty of really great wine. And probably lots of really great food as well!” And I’m fairly certain I’m not alone in that.

But do you know what? I can recall having those thoughts when I was in college. Probably even earlier. And you would think that by the time someone is my age, they would have let go of those sorts of thoughts, and moved beyond them.

But here I am, at 58 years of age— having been ordained for nearly 27 years, and having professed a faith in Jesus Christ for nearly 44 years— and that’s still my default response? All of which makes me wonder if my faith and vocation have been based on the hope and expectation that God is going to handle the catering?

I’ll make another confession: last week I purchased a Powerball ticket. And when I was sure no one was looking I made the sign of the cross over it, and invoked all of the powers designated for someone in my vocation. Obviously that didn’t work, because I’m still here; but that’s another version of expecting God to handle the catering.

And I know I’m not alone in this. I see a lot of people looking for God to intervene in their lives in big and dramatic ways. They’re looking for the mountaintop experience. They’re looking for the dramatic healing. They’re looking to obtain the unobtainable. They’re looking, in other words, for spirituality reality, and the spiritual touch, of God *in the big things*; but especially in the things *they* think are important. And while they’re doing that, they’re missing the touch of God— they’re missing the intervention of God in their lives— in the small things.

In their book, *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life*, Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, talk about how we can learn to see the sacred and

the spiritual in the most common of things and experiences. And they begin their book with these words:

“Life is a spiritual adventure. Every day we encounter signs that point to the active presence of [the] Spirit in the world around us. Spiritual literacy is the ability to read the signs written in the texts of our own experiences.”

And then, the Brussats provided a list of examples of experiences in which the participants encountered the presence of the Spirit. Here are a few of them. Listen and see if any of them sound like something you might have done, or plan to do.

“A group of women gets together once a month to take turns answering one question. They share their deepest concerns and the stories of their lives.

“A retired couple comes to the beach every day with their dogs. They carry garbage bags and pick up litter as they walk. They love the beach and make a habit of caring for it.

“A woman teaches in the Sunday school, and serves as an officer of the women’s group at her church. Through her daily demonstrations of enthusiasm for church work, she inspires others to become involved.

“A young couple has just had their first child and decides to return to the synagogue. They want their boy to relish his ethnic roots and to experience the practice of Judaism.

“A group of therapists gathers on a weekday afternoon to talk about their night dreams, and to do mental imagery exercises as a way of getting in touch with their inner lives.

“A woman in a stressed-filled job attends yoga class every other day. This combination of bodywork and meditation relaxes and revitalizes her.

“A small circle of people meets each month to talk about the story of a movie in relation to the stories of their own lives; they call the process they are going through “soul making.”

I think these examples make it pretty clear that even the most ordinary and everyday of activities and experiences can be full of spiritual insight and meaning, if we only take the time to look for it.

One day, several years ago— and just because we thought it would be fun— my family and I hopped into our car and drove to an artist’s supply shop. And there we purchased a fifty-pound box of sculptors’ clay, and a few simple sculpting tools. We probably spent no more than \$30.

When we returned home, we opened the box of clay, and distributed a large chunk to each of the four of us. Laura, Emily and I sat at the kitchen table, and Peggy took a tray-table into the living room. We put on some music, and as each of us worked at our chunks of clay, we talked about different things. At first, I found that I was anxious about how my piece of sculpture would turn out; but I made myself focus on the *process* of working the clay, and on how good it felt to mold it and shape it.

At some point, something really remarkable happened. As I sat before my lump of clay— I had been *trying* to fashion it into the shape of a dog’s head— I looked at my daughters, across the table from me; and then at my wife, clearly visible in the next room; and I heard the music; and I felt the damp clay in my hands; and at that moment, I felt full. Full of the Spirit. Full of joy. Full of peace. It was a small moment, and it passed quickly as I returned my attention to the clay in front of me.

But in that moment, because I was able to focus on that moment, it became clear that God was near, that God wanted me to have joy in life, and that— setting aside for a little while, all the worries and cares of my life— renewal and refreshment were possible ... even in the moments.

I think that it’s fine to hope for the big things in life from God. It’s fine to hope for relief when we’re burdened. It’s fine to hope for wealth when we’re poor. It’s fine to hope for health when we’re sick. It’s fine to hold out hope for God to intervene in our lives in big ways— like Jesus did at that wedding in Cana of Galilee.

However, as we await those big interventions, may we not forget that, in the midst of our burdens, in the midst of our poverty, and in the midst of our sickness, God still comes to us in the small things, even in the fleeting moments of our lives. And in those moments, small though they may be, and as brief as they may be, the Spirit of God is there, waiting for us to see him and recognize him, and to receive from him, refreshment, and renewal, and strength.

Amen.