

THERE'S NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

By: Fr. O'Dell

The first year I was in college my Latin professor used to opine that there was nothing new under the sun. He used that old saying to illustrate the fact that there are not too many things that happen in our lives that haven't happened to someone else, at some other time and place in human history. Bottom line, don't get too hyped up about the things that come our way because when everything is said and done they've all been tried before and most have come up short. Don't think that you are such a special creature and that the things that come your way are so unique - because the truth is that we are all very much alike and we experience many of the same things as we trudge through life.

When I was young, I used to find this view of the world disturbing. I used to think that life is full of wonderful experiences, new and different people, exciting and innovative occurrences. So, when someone would say that nothing is new under the sun, I would readily point to all of those things that I just described and say: "See, there they are - those are the things that keep life interesting!"

The older I've gotten however, the more I find myself in sympathy with my Latin professor. From a little more calloused viewpoint I can truthfully say that most things that humans do have already been tried in one form or another in the past. The thing that I have experienced that I think are so special - pale a little bit when I realize that they have happened a thousand, a million, a billion times before. Take for instance a new fallen snow during the winter. It is beautiful and even breathtaking, but it is nothing new. It has happened a ton of times before and will happen as many times in the future. How about the thrill of a no hitter baseball game? It's exciting, but not something that the world hasn't seen before. What about falling in love? That's happened since the dawn of history and even though it seems unique to me it really isn't all that different between couples. There really is nothing new under the sun.

Even though this view seems to make sense, there is a huge part of me that still rebels against reducing life to that formula. Yes, there is nothing new about a beautiful snow fall in winter. The world has seen the wonders that God's handiwork in weather time and time again. Nothing new about that. But the truth is that the real miracle of the snow storm is that no two snowflakes are ever created the same. They are all different and unique. What is new is that, that particular configuration in the snow flake has never been seen before and will never be seen again. The same is true for all of the beautiful blossoms that we see on the trees in the Spring. No two blossoms are ever the same - or will ever be repeated again.

The same is true for the no hitter ball game, too. That's been seen before and will be seen again. But, it will never be seen by the same group of people, in the same stadium, with the same combination of weather and excitement as it's being seen today. That's unique and unrepeatable. Falling in love - well that already speaks for itself. Love is universal, but how it is played out between two people who are very much in love differs with each couple. While many things repeat themselves - there is an element of surprise and suspense that accompanies everything we experience. Miracles do happen every day. Most of them are little ones, but they happen nonetheless. We are just not very well trained at sorting them out and seeing them.

So, this June as we begin to change from Spring into Summer - remember to search careful for the little things that come your way that are God's way of telling you that you truly are unique, unrepeatable and special. Take time to recognize the little miracles that cross our paths that catch us off guard and enrich our lives. Make an effort to search for the things that are really unique and special that happen around us every day. Yes, Summer has come and gone many times before - but it will never come and go again in quite the same way, with the same effect - with the same impact that it is having upon us right now. Look for God's miracles. Celebrate them and pass them on. Enjoy the uniqueness of this Summer in your life.