March 3, 2019: Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Last Sunday, we had our first presentation to the parents of our new faith formation program. At the end of the presentation a little boy, named Jeremy Bryant, came up to talk to me. He handed me some sheets of paper and said, “I wrote you a song.” A part of the song goes, “Just one day with Jesus. Just one day to meet the Lord. So please pray and you will see Him and He is a very nice person, so please be a nice person and you will meet Him very soon.” After he gave the song to me and I started to read it, my heart melted. I had a huge smile on my face and thanked him so much for it. You could tell how happy he was that I really liked it.

It was one of those clear moments of God acting in my life. It was obviously not anything major, and yet it helped to remind me of what life is really all about. But at the same time, it could easily have been a moment when I simply missed what God was doing. I consider moments like this as ‘God whispers’. It is like when Elijah went up to the mountaintop: “Then the LORD said: ‘Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will pass by.’ There was a strong and violent wind rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the LORD—but the LORD was not in the wind; after the wind, an earthquake—but the LORD was not in the earthquake; after the earthquake, fire—but the LORD was not in the fire; after the fire, a light silent sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.”

In our busy lives it is so easy to miss these God moments—when God is speaking to us. We create expectations about how we think God is going to make His presence known. We want the Moses moment of the burning bush or the parting of the Red Sea. We want the Paul moment of a blinding flash of light and then hearing the voice of Jesus. We want the Mary moment of an angel showing up and giving us a message. We want a clear sign of what He expects of us so that we don’t need to guess whether or not He is present. But that is not how God usually works. And even when those big moments happen, not everyone will even recognize them.

Think about the fact that as Jesus walked on this planet, He performed amazing miracles—He gave a powerful message. He spoke with an authority not evidenced in any of the prophets before Him. God incarnate stood before them, acting in their midst, speaking to them, and yet they did not recognize this God moment. They simply wanted Jesus to perform miracles for them and then go away. They wanted no part of being truly open to the God moment, because when we have a real God moment, it challenges us to live life in a new way.

Moses was made to go back to Egypt as God’s instrument, to free the people from the bondage of slavery. Paul had to change his entire approach to God and his vision of life, and preach a completely different message than he had previously believed. Mary had to trust God completely—for her fiat was a possible death sentence at her time. Every encounter we have with God is a moment of challenge and transformation. Some challenges are really big ones, like those of Moses, Paul and Mary. Others, sometimes, are really small like mine. I think God was simply calling me to relax and be more present to Him: nothing truly dramatic, life shattering, or monumentally transforming. And yet, sometimes it is the small steps we take that lead us to make big changes in our lives.

Ultimately, it all comes down to simply being open to God and welcoming these God moments. Sometimes they are big moments and sometimes they are simply tiny whispers. But those tiny whispers are God’s way of simply reminding us that He is on the journey with us. He never will abandon or forsake us. God is always with us; we just need to pay attention to what He is doing.

We simply need to remember what Jeremy wrote in his song. He really has given us great advice: “Just one day with Jesus. Just one day to meet the Lord. So please pray and you will see Him, and He is a very nice person, so please be a nice person and you will meet him very soon.”

So, each day is a day to meet the Lord. He is truly a very nice person, so act as He would act. Because we will all meet Him soon, we simply need to be open to God’s voice—His small whisper—and we will recognize that He is there with us.
If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@chelmsfordcatholic.org.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

Fr. Brian