

On one of our nice summer evenings this week, I thought I would have ice cream for dinner, so I pedaled downtown, got a cone and walked it and my bike across the street to sit on sloped grass overlooking the Eau Claire River. Between the river and me there is a bike trail that niftily allows people to safely transport themselves UNDER the busy downtown streets. After I had settled in and was about halfway through my cone, I saw a family of four on their bicycles emerge from under the bridge and move from my left to right. It was a common enough sight. What was a little unusual was the boy bringing up the rear of the line, about ten years old I figure, had a very **fancy yellow helmet** that covered both the crown of his head and his jaws and chin. It was a bit like a motorcycle helmet. He was smiling. I don't think I had any special expression on my face, but **the boy noticed me looking at him. And he gave me a big wave!**

I don't think I'm stretching the truth of the situation when I say that **this boy was very happy**. He was with his parents and his sister, it was summer without the shackles of long pants and a jacket, and he had a very cool helmet on his head. If **the moment of his waving to me could be put into words—which it cannot—the words might have been him saying “Life is good! I am somebody! I like who I am!”** And all that positive energy came out in his unmistakable wave to me. I responded in kind by waving and saying, “That's a cool helmet!” He smiled and nodded, as if to say, “Yep, it is!”

I'm thinking that **the Apostles had one of those “Life is good; I like who I am” kind of moments with Jesus up in Caesarea Philippi**. It's remote—like they're on retreat, sort of like us going “Up North”—and **Jesus asks them their opinion about who he is. They might not be used to this! No one cares about their opinion, or hasn't in the past. They were more comfortable answering who OTHERS say Jesus is, the scribes and Pharisees, scholars of the law—everyone cares about what those people think, but not what these simple fishermen and other common folk think.** They're dumbfounded by the request. Except Peter. He takes a stab at it...and nails it. So much so that Jesus says, “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father.” In other words, “Peter, you didn't come up with this on your own. You didn't have the insight that I am indeed the Christ, the Messiah of God, all on your own. GOD gave you that answer.

Wait. What? God is in me? Active in me? Giving me the right words to say? In ME? And for all of those other Apostles who probably had the same thought but were too afraid to speak it, they too now realize that **God is active in THEM. That's big step toward being ready to serve God in the world—**realizing that God does indeed work through you.

Catholics are pretty good at recognizing our sins—and that has its place for sure—but maybe not as good at acknowledging the good that we do, and especially not the good that we do AS GOD'S ACTION IN US. I read the other day of an African **bishop who suggested that confessionals should have two compartments for those who come to confess** their sins and receive absolution. Compartment A would be for the confession of sins, per usual, but the added **compartment B would be for people who've just received sacramental forgiveness to go and confess all the good things that they did by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Wouldn't that be revolutionary? We'd all be like that kid on his bike with the cool yellow helmet, shining with the certain knowledge that life is good because God is good and God has chosen to work in us.