



Thoughts on the Journey...

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I have to admit it; I was in search of a miracle! I wanted to see, first-hand, what my friend described to me about her experience with a healing Mass and a Filipino man who had a mystical experience with the Blessed Mother.

Apparently, he was given the gift of touching ordinary fresh rose petals, which were then transformed with miraculous images of Mary and Jesus. She showed me the rose petal that she received from that encounter. I would not have believed it, if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. There, perfectly present on her rose petal, was the image of the Last Supper as clearly as if an artist had etched it.

That same visionary from the Philippines, Carmelo Cortez, was scheduled to be in Cincinnati later that week. I cleared my calendar and invited three of my children to join me. On the two hour drive down I-71 south, we talked with anticipation of being able to experience a miracle! We were told ahead of time that everyone who wishes will receive a rose petal, but not every petal will have an image. As a point of clarity, I mentioned that we are already people of faith who trust and believe in all that God gives us. If for some reason, our rose petals do not have an image, it will not change what we already believe. I have to be honest, as soon as those words came out of my mouth, I said a quiet prayer internally, asking to receive that gift from heaven.

When we arrived, the church was filled with people. Mass was celebrated followed by the healing prayer service with the rose petals. Fresh white roses were brought into the sanctuary where Carmelo pulled the buds from the stems and placed them in a vat of water. He then gently moved his hands through the water and immediately, the entire church was filled with the strong fragrance of roses. The congregation was then invited to come forward to receive healing prayer and a rose petal. As I moved closer to the sanctuary I felt a strong sense of wanting and anticipation. First I received a blessing from the priest and then a rose petal from Carmelo that was placed over my heart. When I returned to my pew, I looked at the petal and there was an image of a crown of thorns. I felt so blessed in that moment to bear witness to such a miracle.

In, the weeks that followed, I found myself going over the events of that evening and realized that I was so focused on the miracle of the rose petals, that I lost sight of the real miracle that I received that night.

In the gospel of John this week, Jesus went up on a mountain and sat with his disciples to get a break from ministering to the large crowds. Looking up, he saw that a huge crowd, seeking miracles of healing, followed him. Moved with compassion, Jesus spoke to his apostles, trying to find food to feed these people. There was a boy in the multitude of followers who had five barley loaves and two fish.

Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted."

Needless to say, the people were awestruck at the miracle they witnessed and acknowledged Jesus as the Prophet who was to come into the world.

Like the people of Jesus' time, and like all of us today, we are looking for something to *feed* us, to *fill* us, and to *satisfy* us. We are searching for that *miracle* that will clinch our faith and alleviate all doubts. Ultimately, we are looking for love - unconditional, lasting love. And where can it be found? The irony of what we seek, is that it is within us - nurtured and fed by the food given to us by our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Each one of us walks through the doors of our church each week bringing with us, the gamut of our every day existence: the joys, the sorrows, the triumphs, the losses, the mundane, the failures, our desires, our sinfulness, our histories, the *all* of who we are caught in the crowd of our human condition. We bring the ordinary of our lives and carry it to the altar of the *divine*, the place where heaven meets earth - the place of transformation. Christ is present to us during Mass in the Word, in sacrament, and in one another. Whether we feel it or not, it is the Holy Spirit that brings us together in worship where the divine love of God takes our ordinary, breaks it open, consecrates it, and gives us all the grace we need to share in his divinity. The words of consecration are not only to transform the bread and wine, but they are meant to transform us as well, as long as we cooperate with the grace we are given. Just as the bread and wine become the real presence of Christ, so too are we to be transformed into living Eucharist to bring into the world.

The miracle of the rose petal images was amazing, but paled in comparison to the Eucharist I received that evening. If you're looking for a miracle, go to the source of all miracles. He can be found in our church daily, waiting for you, with love, in the Holy Eucharist.