

“Morning”

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Morning has always been a special time for me. It is a time when we are presented with new life. Morning is a time of Easter when we are presented with change and new possibilities. It is a time when new ideas come and inspiration flows. It is a time when we have come from being asleep to being awake, from the darkness of the night to the breaking of the new day and light.

Ever since I can remember I have loved to get up early, fix a cup of coffee, be alone, and enjoy the slow entrance of the new day. It is a good time to write and listen and let the imagination rev up. God added something very special when he created the morning.

There are more than 60 verses in the Bible that pertain to morning. One of my favorites comes from Exodus when God gave Moses instructions:

"So be ready by morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain. "No man is to come up with you, nor let any man be seen anywhere on the mountain; even the flocks and the herds may not graze in front of that mountain." So he cut out two stone tablets like the former ones, and Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and he took two stone tablets in his hand.

What is asked of Moses is also asked of us.

"So be ready by morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain"

We are to be ready by morning and come to where God is. God is waiting for us when we wake up. Morning time prepares us for Easter morning. The question Easter poses to us is this: are we ready for change, for new life, for being inspired. Or are we stuck, have we dead-ended, are we unable to adventure, see things from new vantage points, listen to music we have never before heard, or listen to old ideas and old music in new ways.

Easter invites us to become Morning people who go to where God is waiting for them. Do we make ourselves available to God or do we remain asleep and stuck in the darkness of the night.

One sign of God's presence is inspiration. Where we are inspired God is present. We need inspiration to be alive. We need God in order to be inspired.

A couple of years ago I met a Nun from France. Sister Michelle. She is both a Sister and a Nurse and she told me a recent story from her life that I have never forgotten.

Some years ago she was stationed in Lebanon. The fighting was heated in the Middle East. One day she was driving a white jeep in

Palestine carrying blood for children who had leukemia in a far away orphanage.

She stopped for a light and overpowered by 4 young men with automatic weapons that took over the jeep and put Sister Michelle in the back seat.

Hardly a word was spoken and in a short time they were at the Ocean and Sister Michelle was told to drop to the ground, which she did, as the guns were aimed at her head. She knew she was going to be killed.

She knew the men wanted the jeep. One gun came closer and nestled beside her neck. Sister Michelle is fluent in several languages. She remembered hearing a couple of words in the jeep and the young men sounded like he was from Iran, whose language she is fluent in.

So in Persian Sister Michelle said ‘do you have children? I am a nurse and taking blood to children who are dying of leukemia. Do you really want these children not to receive the blood? She had her eyes closed as she spoke. Suddenly she opened them and she was alone. She looked up and her jeep was still there and none of the 4 men were to be seen.

In the midst of a nightmare, Sister Michelle opened herself to inspiration and the light that was shone to her. It saved her life. It saved her ministry to the children who counted on her.

Eleanor Farjeon in the 1930's said it well in the words to one of our favorite hymns:

Morning has broken, like the first morning.
Blackbird has spoken, like the first bird.
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning,
Praise for them springing fresh from the Word.

Like Easter morning brings a sunrise of the opening of our eyes.

Somewhere in our lives something needs to continually ask us how we are living our lives. Attending church might do that for you. Reflecting in your journal might be another place. Morning reflections often are inspired. Here is a beautiful example of inspired reflection:

"I've missed more than nine thousand shots in my basketball career. I've lost almost three hundred games. Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over again in my life, but I still keep going out on the court. And that's why I succeed." Michael Jordan

I wonder if Michael wrote those lines in the morning.

Inspiration is a gift of grace from God. It arrives when we are waiting and are open. Here is one of my favorite stories from Albert Einstein.

When Albert Einstein was making the rounds of the speaker's circuit, he usually found himself eagerly longing to get back to his laboratory work. One night as they were driving to yet another

chicken dinner, Einstein mentioned to his chauffeur (a man who somewhat resembled Einstein in looks and manner) that he was tired of speechmaking.

"I have an idea, boss," his chauffeur said. "I've heard you give this speech so many times. I'll bet I could give it for you."

Einstein laughed loudly and said, "Why not? Let's do it!"

When they arrived at the dinner, Einstein donned the chauffeur's cap and jacket and sat in the back of the room. The chauffeur gave a beautiful rendition of Einstein's speech and even answered a few questions expertly.

Then a supremely pompous professor asked an extremely esoteric question about anti-matter formation, digressing here and there to let everyone in the audience know that he was nobody's fool.

Without missing a beat, the chauffeur fixed the professor with a steely stare and said, "Sir, the answer to that question is so simple that I will let my chauffeur, who is sitting in the back, answer it for me."

Inspired humor. Do any of laugh enough? Someone told me once that they were taught that good Christians do not laugh in church. Can you imagine that? Sometimes the best parts of the sermon are jokes, right. Have you ever woke up laughing? Sometimes I have laughed during the night. Inspired humor is a gift, perhaps a necessary one to maintain our sanity.

These are answers given for a GED exam at the school:

Q: What guarantees may a mortgage company insist one?

A: If you are buying a house they will insist that you are well endowed.

Q: How can you delay milk from turning sour?

A: Keep it in the cow.

Q: What is the most common form of birth control?

A: Most people prevent contraception by wearing a condominium.

Poems are often written in the early morning. Perhaps it is then we have the courage and silence to be creative. Some people have private times with themselves in the morning, sitting in the garden, taking a long walk, working out in the basement, sitting in a favorite chair, and listening. One of my favorite poets is a farmer from Kentucky,

Wendell Barry. Like a lot of farmers I imagine he has written a lot of poem as the sun comes up on his farm. Here is one of his poems:

The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

God is waiting for us in the morning. God wants us to come from the sleep and the darkness and find the light. God says: “let there be a morning time” for then you will know how I provide for you fresh chances, a clean slate, what needs to change in our lives and what we have failed to live.

We can get fired, get lost, be frightened,
be downsized, be irrelevant, be incompetent,
be nuts, be older than the hills, be green behind the ears,
be out of our mind, out of sync, out of step,
out of shape, lose our quickness, our habits, our nerve.

And God is still there waiting for us in the morning.

We can be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual;
we can live in mansions, cardboard boxes,
In the back seat of old cars;
we can have lots of degrees after our name, we can forget our name,
we can have lots of names;
we can know everything, know nothing, be a know at all;

we can be tiny, huge, funny looking, ivy leaguers, minor leaguers
have our bodies pierced with ear rings, have our bodies laced with
scars,
have bodies that we prefer to hide or show off,
bodies that are wearing out or bodies just getting in shape,.

We can attend church for 50 years and still wonder if we have a soul
we can be watching someone we love die very slowly;
we can look in the mirror and wonder who we have become;
we can live on the wrong side of town, brand new to town,
know no one in town, we can be a mess, a gift, a no body

Our lives can become anything and everything and no matter what,
God will be there with inspiration, motivation, a new angle, an idea
you have never thought of, some stories you need to understand.

So be ready in the morning

I have wondered about the isolation of people like Helen Keller who was born blind and deaf. What that must be like is staggering to me and perhaps to them or perhaps not. So it touched me recently when I read of the connection between Helen Keller and Mark Twain.

When Helen was 14 years old she met Mark Twain and as she wrote “the instant I clasped his hand I knew he was my friend. “ She felt he knew her very well and what it felt like to be blind and not be able to keep up with others.

Once when someone said to Mark Twain how dull it must be for Helen, with every day the same and every night the same as every day. Mark Twain filed back “You’re dam wrong there; blindness is an exciting business. If you don’t believe it, get up some dark night on the wrong side of your bed when the house is on fire and try to find the door.”

Mark Twain took the time to talk with Helen Keller on many occasions. She said “he always kept me in mind while he talked and he treated me like a competent human being.

In her deaf and blind isolation, Helen found a morning in the form of powerful intimate friendship with Mark Twain. He was vulnerable with her. She said “perhaps my strongest impression of him was that of sorrow. There was about him the air of someone who had suffered greatly. “

Openness to an unexpected friendship. Vast sensitivity regardless of whether one can see or hear. Feeling a person’s suffering without them telling you. The morning time in our lives brings an inspired sense of being alive.

Mornings bring new stories to old lives, fresh considerations to people who think they have it all figured out. Mornings bring unexpected creative reactions.

The Yale Physician, Richard Selzer, tells the following story of a young woman and her husband.

I stand by the bed where a young woman lays, her face postoperative, her mouth twisted in palsy, clownish. A tiny twig of the facial nerve, the one to the muscles of her mouth, has been severed. She will be thus from now on. The surgeon had followed with religious fervor the curve of her flesh; I promise you that. Nevertheless, to remove the tumor in her cheek, I had to cut the little nerve. Her young husband is in the room. He stands on the opposite side of the bed and together they seem to dwell in the evening lamplight, isolated from me, private. Who are they, I ask myself, he and this wry mouth I have made, who gaze at and touch each other so generously, greedily?

The young woman speaks. "Will my mouth always be like this?" she asks.

"Yes," I say, "it will. It is because the nerve was cut."

She nods and is silent. But the young man smiles. "I like it," he says, "It is kind of cute." All at once I know who he is. I understand and I lower my gaze. One is not bold in an encounter with a god.

Unmindful, he bends to kiss her crooked mouth and I am so close I can see how he twists his own lips to accommodate to hers and the husband says to his wife "our kiss still works and they both smile.

They had found the inspiration in their love. They had come awake in the middle of a very dark time.

We easily become hardened and closed off. The years of difficulty and heavy news from the world can thicken our skin, leaving us like rocks, unable to be touched.

In three weeks we will celebrate Easter morning. Let us now prepare ourselves by softening our eyes, becoming vulnerable to creative suggestions, extending our welcome to what we now need to try, to let new breath come into to the old rooms. Easter is a time of early morning, when we receive a fresh page, a road seldom traveled, a new skin for what has become outdated, inflexible and lifeless. Let us be ready for the morning and the breaking of the new day.

Let us pray: May we take with joy the promises of morning and the challenges of Easter to live fully what God has given us to become.