

SLEEPING ON THE JOB

It was nightmare week this week in the Demerjian house! Not just one, but both, of our kids were waking up in the middle of the night with bad dreams. Nora even woke up several times per night, a torture lessened only slightly because she's so cute. At 3AM she'd open the door and just sit in the dark entrance to our bedroom with Lego flowers as a peace offering for waking us up again. Needless to say, this week I sleep-walked through my work. For Dn. Albert, of course, sleep deprivation has become routine with baby Mikayel. So let's just say that on Wednesday when the two of us met to review our Diocesan bylaws, there was many a yawn.

So I sleep-walked through this past week because I was physically exhausted, but the truth is, it is easy to walk through life half-asleep without even being sleep-deprived. Life has a way of dulling us down and hollowing us out with the drudgery and repetition of everyday problems, people and routines. It is all too easy in the mechanized and digital world we live in to become a mechanized and digitized person. We can become very efficient and productive, but with eyes and hearts devoid of passion-like a robot. And as I move into my 13th year as a priest and as pastor of St. Hagop, I struggle mightily to resist becoming a religious robot; to retain the passion, the gratitude and the care that is my calling. Maybe you can also identify with this struggle in your career and personal callings.

Well for me and for all those who struggle to stay awake to the gratitude, passion and wonder which lies behind the surface of our everyday lives, there is hope in today's celebration of the feast of Transfiguration. It seems we are in good company when it comes to walking through the miracle of life half asleep. In Luke's Gospel, we see that even Jesus' beloved disciples were vulnerable in this way. As daylight was fading on another long day in their ministry, Jesus called Peter, James and John to climb up a small mountain for retreat. He told the disciples "keep awake and pray." Our Lord knew a few great truths about us. When we experience spectacular things, we soon take them for granted. We have the capacity to love, feel and know deeply, but we settle for lesser things. We are asleep at the times when we should be awake....and that is just what happened to the disciples -they fell sound asleep. But as they awoke, they saw Jesus transfigured, literally in a new light; "and his face shone like the sun... his clothes became white as light and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him (Mt 17:1-13)."

As you well know now as a postulate of the Scriptures, this story is not just about one time when Jesus' followers were asleep to the glory of God. It is about us as Jesus' followers, then and now, who are asleep to the glory of God. But hold on a minute, you might say! Peter, James and John were with Jesus the only begotten Son of God, when he lit up like the sun. I wouldn't be asleep to God if he showed me a sign like that! But the fact is that God does show us signs like that, with every sunrise, with every meal we share, with every waking breath. God shows us, but can we see? GK Chesterton thinks the problem lies with us, with the dullness of our human sight. He wrote that we enlightened humans have come to see the sunrise and the day which follows from it as a mechanical process of the laws of nature, robotically the same every day. But God's way may be quite different. Judging from his creation, it seems that God takes great delight in routine. It is quite plausible that God squeals with delight like a child as he tells the sun each morning; 'do it again, do it again'. He intends that child-like delight for us. That's why our scriptures and tradition remind us, that-if we have the eyes to see- every sunrise, every breath, every moment together can be seen as a transfiguration; a window through the ordinary to glimpse the glory of God and the world he has created.

So today on the feast of the Transfiguration, let us arise from our sleep to discern the miraculous presence of God which lies hidden behind the repetition and routines of our every day. This is no simple task, but rather a life-long discipline in following Christ. And following Christ's way, I pray that one day we see Transfiguration as not simply a holy day in the year, but a description of who we are. The transfigured people of God. Those who open our eyes and see a transfigured world. Those who open our ears and hear a transfiguring voice. Those who open our hearts daily to a transfigured life by the grace of God and; now and always and unto the ages of ages, amen.