

# Miracle Waiting to Happen

*We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life-this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us. 1 John 1:1-2*

Today is the fifth Sunday of Easter and the feast of the Apparition of the Cross. This feast recalls the early morning of Pentecost May 7, 351 when a bright cross burned across the sky in Jerusalem, from Golgotha to the Mount of Olives. Faithful Christians of Jerusalem gazed at this sign for hours, reassured of God's promises in difficult times, like the rainbow after the great flood. 1700 years later, we still recall this great sign each year on the fifth Sunday of Easter, not so much as another of God's great magic tricks, but as a revelation of the deep magic in all things, the miracle that is always waiting to happen.

If you want God's great magic tricks, head out to Tampa Bay in the evening and watch a sunset. If the beauty of the sunset itself doesn't have you whispering a prayer, maybe one day you'll see a giant cross in the sky or the face of our Lord in the clouds. But then let's be clear about what we are seeing. Crosses in the clouds, rainbows in the sky, a cool breeze, these are great signs of God's love, but not because they are one time, secret messages from God. Rather, all of life, all of creation is an all-time, wide open message from God. Sorry there is no secret to decode, no need to see Jesus' face in the clouds; God's face, God's hand is in everything. That is the sign, the miracle behind all things in this awesome world and life that we so often take for granted. God made this all simply out of love, simply to imprint his grace on all of creation, from the grand sky and oceans, to the tiniest flowers and bees.

God is truly grand and miraculous, he can be seen in the vast ocean, the majestic rainbow and the dazzlingly sunset over Tampa Bay. But let's also be careful that in seeking God's most dramatic wonders, we don't overlook his ordinary and intimate ones. The seven weeks of the Easter season take every chance to remind us of this. Sure Jesus' resurrection was spectacular and dramatic, but we have no direct witness of it. Instead, as in today's readings from Acts and 1 John, Jesus is encountered after his resurrection in very concrete and ordinary settings. He appears to his disciples walking on the road to Emmaus, roasting fish on the beach, or looking like a gardener. These moments from Scripture encourage us to discover God's presence in the ordinary and the material; we do not have to wait for supernatural apparitions. All of the traditional churches uphold this principle in our sacraments; where the visible and tactile are the primary doorway to God's invisible Spirit. This is why all of the formal sacraments of our church insist on a material element like bread, wine, water, salt, oil, basil and grapes. This is why in worship we encounter God with all our senses; incense, kshots, gilded vessels and vestments, chanted words of God. As the Apostle John writes in today's reading, it seems God's oldest miracle is ongoing, God's invisible Spirit wishes to dwell in all visible creation, including the human heart. This is part of the blueprint of creation.

'We declare to you what was from the beginning,' writes John, 'what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life-this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us.' The greatest miracle of creation was God's plan from the beginning, that Love itself would become manifest, a person that we could hear, see with our eyes, look at, and touch with our hands. God would not only remain awesome as the sky and the sea, he would come near, to love us and lift us up to him. God's love always begins with the ordinary and particular: this woman, this paper, this building, this lady Mary, this Jesus from Nazareth. For it is the individual and the concrete that opens our hearts to encounter God with our whole selves; heart, mind and soul. This is the purest form of spirituality and the greatest miracle; to find God in what is right in front of us, the sacrament of the present moment.

So let us seek God in all things, in the ancient Apparition of the Cross and in the awesome beauty of his creation; the planets, the skies and seas. Let's just be careful that in seeking grand signs from God, we don't overlook His greatest ones, which are hidden in plain sight, in the ordinary grace of the present. This, our epistle reading reminds us, was God's first "idea," his first and greatest miracle, to pour out His infinite love into finite, visible forms. For this is truly the miracle that is always waiting to happen; in every day and every way, in things small and great, in you and in me, now and always and unto the ages of ages, amen.