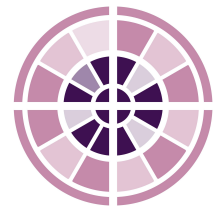


# Finding the Holy in the Ordinary

a mini-retreat with the Spirited Women  
of Saint Mark's Cathedral

*November 2020*



# From Penny Reid



Penny's blog: [www.alwaysbridging.com](http://www.alwaysbridging.com)

From Deborah Brown



# From Sarah Elwood

A much loved teacher once pointed me to a poem that has traveled with me, especially the line, "I...have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons, I have measured out my life with coffee spoons." Reflecting on how I encounter the holy in everyday life, what comes to mind is making coffee in a quiet house each morning, much loved lives in this house still sleeping, my hands going through identical motions regardless of what else may be swirling within or around me. Sometimes as I do it, I think of the pasts that came before or the futures yet to come, in which I have done / will do these exact motions, in the midst of joy, loss, love, worry, uncertainty, resolve, and so much more. Other times, the coffee making is just the coffee making - unnoticed, ordinary, and yet still sacred. This for encapsulates our journeys with the holy: Sometimes right up front, sometimes unrecognized as such, yet an ever-present thread that binds together the moments of our lives.





# From Sallie Crotty

I love to bake pumpkin bread. I often bake it as gifts for other people,  
but I love baking it for my family as well.

It's often given as a gift of gratitude or hope for healing for others.

The recipe came from my maternal grandmother,  
so I have been eating it all of my life.

The recipe consists of many ingredients,  
and I have practically memorized it by now. Each recipe makes three loaves.

I feel God and the Holy in the process of making it because  
I am connected to my past and reminded of the strong and spirited women  
my mother and grandmother were.

Also, I am completely focused while making it. It brings peace,  
one of God's gifts, because after the bread is baked,  
my family and friends enjoy it with tea or coffee.

## PUMPKIN BREAD

2½ c. flour

3 c. sugar

2 tsp. soda

2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice

2 tsp. cinnamon

2 tsp. nutmeg

2½ tsp. salt

2 c. pumpkin (one #2 can)

4 eggs

2 c. Wesson oil

½ c. plus 3 T. water

½ c. chopped pecans, if desired

Preheat oven to 350°. Grease and flour three loaf pans. Bake at 350° for about 50 minutes.

*Sallie Smither Crotty*

# From Nancy George

I came out of the store one day on my way to the car. This guy was standing by the road and he stopped me to ask for money. I told him that I don't give to panhandlers, I give to the food bank. Anybody can go there for food. He said that he wasn't a panhandler. He's homeless. I went home and thought about our encounter. I felt like he was an honest man. There was something in his eyes. I thought about him for several days after that. I decided that I couldn't change his path in life, but I could give him a hand. I can give the homeless a hand. I could find out where shelters are located and help them get there. I checked about the food bank. I had assumed it was open all day, but my assumption was incorrect. It's only open in the morning...not a viable option for people who have no place to store food or prepare it. I was thinking about how we learn to live in the world. Most of us grow up in a home with a family. There are exceptions, but our home is the base of our lives. We don't usually learn to live on the streets. I believe it's a cold, hard environment...not always kind or supportive. I keep an eye out for that guy when I go to that store. It's possible that he was a messenger from God and I might not see him again, but I got the message.

# From Amanda Osenga

“Of all the things he could've chosen to be done  
"in remembrance" of him, Jesus chose a meal.  
He could have asked his followers to do something  
impressive or mystical--  
climb a mountain, fast for forty days, or  
have a trippy sweat lodge ceremony--  
but instead he picks the most ordinary of acts,  
eating, through which to be present to his people.  
He says that the bread is his body  
and the wine is his blood.  
He chooses the unremarkable  
and plain, average  
and abundant, bread and wine.”

— Tish Harrison Warren, Liturgy of the Ordinary



# From Libby Carr

I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit  
in the early morning of Christmas two years in a row,  
at about the same hour.

It was a clear question that "someone"  
was asking me for two successive years  
because the first year,  
I sort of "blew it off."

At the time, and afterwards,  
I attributed the asker to be my guardian angel,  
but I believe they are manifestations of God as well.

From Juan Gardner



# From Lynne Cobb



I struggled to think of what is holy in my ordinary daily life since I have retired. Yes, I read the bible every day because I'm using one of those "read the bible in a year" books, but sometimes this doesn't seem very holy when I am mired in some of the strange books of the Old Testament.

Then I received a Facebook post today from the Lutheran pastor who accompanied us on our pilgrimage last year on the Camino De Santiago in Spain. His words about what he learned were set into the context of what we are dealing with these days waiting for our election results to be finalized. It made me realize that the three Facebook Groups I belong to that deal with the subject of this amazing walk that I took last fall are keeping me in touch with those holy moments of a year ago on a daily basis. First, there is our own group that walked together. We have a Facebook group where we still share our thoughts about our experience. Then, there is a local Seattle Camino group. When there isn't a pandemic, they sponsor walks a few times a month. I have met a bunch of really great people walking around Seattle and remembering what it is like to be on a pilgrimage. Then, there is the national US Camino Group. Since no one is currently allowed into Spain, this group has been posting pictures and reminiscences galore about their past pilgrimages. I can and do access this on a daily basis and it reminds me that those holy moments will come again but are also available to us in our minds every time we take a walk.

# From Lynne Cobb

## Four Lessons from the Camino

Here is what Pastor Merle learned (and hopefully me too!):

**Lesson Number One- It is Never What You Expected.** You read, you listen to others, you look at the pictures and the brochures, you watch the videos, but the truth is every Camino is unique and has its own twists, turns, complications, joys and setbacks along the way. No matter what you may have “expected” from this election, just know that no journey ever turns out to be exactly what you expect.

**Lesson Number Two- You will think that you are ready, but you are not.** I had confidence in my training, in my equipment, in the shoes (that I had spent months breaking in to assure that I would not have problems!) I had hiked before, backpacked, and camped. I figured I would have no problems. I blistered. I ached. I had not walked enough, or far enough, or for enough hours on end to prepare me for what would lie ahead. I scarred. I endured. I pushed through. I took the respite when it was possible and gritted through when I had to. It is what you do. No matter where you are politically, recognize that there will be things about this election for which you were not ready, and that even in the midst of that, you can endure. kilometers. No matter your political persuasion, look for the signs along the way of the world shifting, changing, moving, old things being let go of and new things being provided for you. Much of the Camino was spent with me saying under my breath, “One foot in front of another, find a rhythm, set a pace...” Once you find a way to move forward, the rest falls into place.

**Lesson Number Three—Revel in the small.** If you walk always with your eyes only on your destination, you will miss what is unfolding around you. Notice the tokens along the way. See the cross of sticks woven into the fence where someone stopped to do penance or to pray. Notice a stone left on top of a marker that marks something that someone has carried and now put down, a charm laying at the foot of a marker. See the basket of apples set outside an orchard marked “For the Peregrino.” Recognize that some have walked this way before you, and that some are caring about you though they don’t know you, and that burdens have been laid down that have been carried for lifetimes and kilometers. No matter your political persuasion, look for the signs along the way of the world shifting, changing, moving, old things being let go of and new things being provided for you.

**Lesson Number Four—Shared experience is more powerful than positions, philosophies or ideals.** When one walks with others, conversation is all you have, and you might think that arguments would be frequent. After all, we’re tired, hot, and grumpy and our feet hurt – why not gripe? But in truth, the shared experience of needing to care and help one another outweighs any of our petty political, social or even religious differences. The shared experience of the journey to a destination that is the same but different for each of us teaches us to respect each other’s journey. So, I can light candles with my Roman Catholic pilgrims in the small chapels along the way with them, not for the same reason, but because the experience we share is more than the sum of our belief systems and we do this for and with one another. So much of our “election journey” right now focused on red/blue, win/lose, elections have consequences/loss of influence. It is hard to remember that we are in a Democracy together, and that the goal of the democratic process is to journey toward “a more perfect union”... not an imposition of beliefs. Revel in the largest voter turn out in decades. Trust in and insist on the counting of every vote, not to determine who wins, but to safeguard this experience we have, this privilege of the journey of Democracy. Accept the outcome, congratulate the opponent, learn from the experience, work to make it one that we can all take together.

# From Mary Segall



These two photos bring me such joy - driving my younger granddaughter during the lockdown has not been occurring very frequently - I am now back on the "job" and enjoying hearing share how her day went, anticipating perhaps her first kiss from a very shy 16 year old - and wondering if she should take the initiative and kiss him - and then seeing my older granddaughter find her way - having graduated cum laude from Seattle University and not being able to find or line up any job prospects - going home and finding work renovating houses - seeing her joy at doing new things and feeling good about herself - what would have seemed like ordinary events in past days are extraordinary today and bring me such joy. So in summary, feelings of joy come from good things in life - big and small. I read on Thursday in the Daily Word, that eternal joy exists within me and does not depend on anyone or anything else. Through my oneness with God, the infinite source of joy is always available to me.





# From Julia Logan

I have taken inspiration from a number of articles I've read over the last few months. All have been a variation on paring down expectations, focusing on the simple rather than the complex, looking for small moments of beauty and/or peace.

To that end, I've started keeping a logbook. Not a journal or diary, but a simple jotting down, in a few words, or sometimes in pictures, of moments from each day. I've found that I now actively anticipate these moments. Being open to these tiny moments means I am more apt to notice them. The more I notice them, the more I'm open to them. And the more I realize that the holy is in the ordinary.

The angle of the afternoon sun.

Slowly washing my morning mug and bowl.

Conversation with a friend.

Watching the cat play with a rediscovered toy.

Watching the rain on the trees outside my window.

Leaves slowly, languidly drift from a branch to the sidewalk.

Vivid fall color framed against grey sky and buildings.



From Christine Szabadi



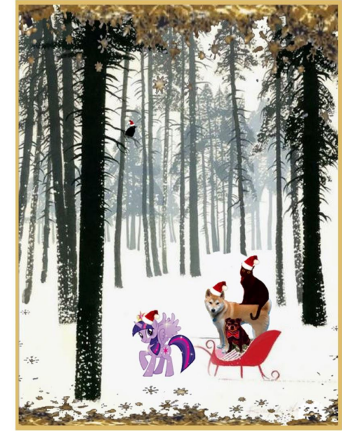
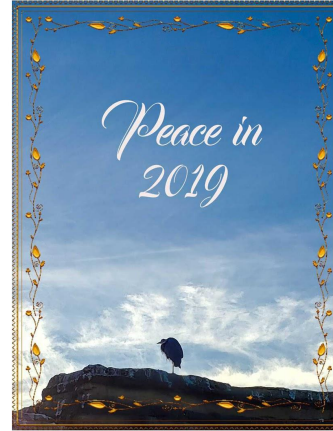
# From Miz Coco

I often see God's love reflected in animals' behaviors and personalities. Even if an animal is suffering or sick, the animal often makes the best of the moment and can feel love even for cruel individuals and situations.

I see God's love and resilience reflected in rescued pit bulls who were used for dog fighting bait.

I see God's love in cats who still manage to enjoy each day even while living with cancer.

I find that working with animals and helping people understand these wonderful creatures helps me understand God's love for all beings.





# From Kathy Albert



# From Cate Callahan

## *A Reflection On The Holy In Daily Life:*

So many times I have felt the presence of God in my daily life,  
but right now one that always stands out took place  
at the Swamp Creek Park and Ride  
(have always gotten a grin out of that name...guess we were The Swamp Creek Riders...grin),  
which is surely a very ordinary place.  
However, the event was anything but ordinary:  
I got there early and got a seat on the only bench.  
It was a cold morning, and as I sat there just looking around all of a sudden  
I saw God painting across the sky....  
all kinds of colors just rolling across the early morning sky as if it was just unwinding.  
Not going from side to side, but rolling out.  
I was just stunned watching this happening at first,  
then I looked at the other people on the bench and standing in line.  
No-one else seemed to notice what was happening, and I was just shocked.  
The very unusual **\*rainbow\*** finally stopped.  
I again checked the expressions on the other people, and nothing.  
Guess I was the only one who saw/experienced this wonder.  
I thanked God, and just sat there in wonder.....

# From Cate Callahan

## Nutmeg Logs, Courtesy of my daughter Erin Callahan Olander

Pre-heat oven to 350.

### **Ingredients:**

1 C butter, 2 T vanilla, 1 t brandy extract,  $\frac{3}{4}$  C sugar, 1 egg, 3 C flour, 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  t nutmeg,  $\frac{1}{4}$  t salt.

Cream butter and flavorings, gradually beat in sugar, mixing well, then add eggs, mixing well.

In a paper bag mix together the flour, nutmeg and salt. Shake the bag to thoroughly mix together.

Add the flour mixture to the butter mixture gradually, mixing well.

Divide the dough into 14 pieces.

On a sugared board, roll each piece into 12"X1/2" rolls, and cut into 2" lengths.

Bake on greased cookie sheet for 12 minutes and cool on wire rack.

Spread each with the frosting of your choice and sprinkle with sugar/nutmeg mixture.

**For the frosting:** Cream 1/3 C butter with 1 t vanilla and 2 t brandy extract.

Blend in 2 C powdered sugar and 2 t light cream. Beat until smooth and creamy.



# From Amanda Mogg

We are not called to be right; we  
are called to be right with one  
another.



# From Nancy Ross

## **We Fight to Live**

We fight to live because we're too  
afraid to die. It's only because we  
don't know what happens at the end of this  
short ride. Like a newborn child petrified of a new bright light  
who without a peep falls asleep  
on familiar strangers that same night.  
The Earth itself like anyone else  
spins waiting for its time  
to be erased on its surface  
by the hands of humankind.  
Shake that etchasketch of a lifeline.  
That tiny note in a symphony's tune  
how trivial an individual really  
matters in the long run...  
dinosaur-sized skyscrapers  
mammoth-sized rides  
moments as large to you as when



she said "I Do" or ones as small  
as catching fireflies.  
I don't need my life to be an  
Easter Island, no Aurora borealis  
No Everest peak, no Stonehenge.  
I just want my existence to brighten as many other  
people's journeys as I can...as large  
as being a son  
and as small as a doodle  
a nurse delivered  
from a stranger down the hall  
That one can smile from  
surprise and  
tape it to her wall  
For a weeklong visit  
in a children's hospital  
when you were six years old.

-Pat Hetic

# From Cristi Chapman

Notice?

*A container holding liquid  
A bowl full of water  
An ingredient for bread or tea  
A clean dish ready to be put away  
A dirty dish to be cleaned and then put away*

Or maybe, something else:

*Water, poured out and dribbled everywhere,  
like God poured out in you and me.  
The sun, lighting up the Son  
and your and my belovedness.  
The world, reflected back, turned right side up,  
the way the Holy Spirit sees it,  
the way things will be in the end  
when we let go of ourselves and  
finally fall into the hands of God.*

Trinity, revealed for a fleeting moment, forever.

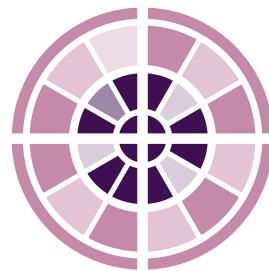


Additional reflections shared by:

*Deborah Anderson*

*Rachel Baker*

*Lorelei Amato*



*--Thank you all for the amazing offerings!*



***For these and all your  
gifts Gracious One,  
we give thanks.***