**Spring Comes to Ordinary Times**

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By Lucia A. Silecchia

It was a happy confluence of mundane events that brought three long awaited signs of hope in a single week.

First, the temperature reached 60 degrees for the first time in months. On that sunny and (relatively) warm day, everyone I greeted on campus, running errands, or walking in my neighborhood had something joyful to say about the spark of springtime that we all shared.

Second, I saw the first crocuses of spring bloom from my neighbors’ snow glazed lawns. As if on cue, these giddy optimists of the floral world burst forth with the solemn purple and bold gold of their blooms.

Third, the owners of a small town ice cream shop that is a favorite summer destination of mine began a springtime countdown on their Facebook page. The post listed the number of days until spring and teasingly asked “*Who’s Counting?”* I certainly am!

These three events, coming together as closely as they did, were especially welcomed this year because it has been a long winter in more ways than one. There is something in human nature that seems to seek for the good ever more eagerly in challenging times. To me, the warmth of a bright sun, the bloom of a new flower, and the promise of ice cream to come are all things I am celebrating just a little more than usual this year.

A few days after the sunshine, snow fell again. There will still be a wait before other flowers join my neighbors’ crocuses for a genuine start to spring. And the promise of long summer nights eating ice cream on a park bench is still too far away to taste.

But, maybe the glory is in the glimmer. Maybe it is just enough to see that there is good that lies ahead. Maybe it is promise that provides the joyful hope that brightens the lingering darkness of winter.

Life, too, is that way. So often, what makes challenges possible to face is to be able to hope for what comes ahead and lies beyond today. Anyone who has lost a job and seeks another knows that. Anyone who has had a dream dashed and dares to dream again knows that. Anyone who hopes for the return of a wayward loved one knows that. Anyone who endures long days of illness hoping for healing knows that. Anyone who weeps at the grave of a loved one, with a broken heart that whispers “life is changed, not ended” knows that.

Lent, too, is that way. It is no mere coincidence that the ancient root of the word “Lent” is the word for spring. It is that time that bridges the darkness of winter, of longing, of weakness, and of suffering and connects it to the joyful hope of fulfilment, triumph, and Resurrection after suffering and death lose their grip.

When I think of the joy that fills my heart when I contemplate sunshine, flowers and ice cream, I have to stop and think how small and, even, trivial, those joys are compared to what is yet to be and what lies ahead. And, yet, I am so deeply grateful for a God who gives me these small pleasures to cherish because He knows that, most often, my heart cannot quite contemplate much more.

In April, I will rejoice in the glory that is beyond my comprehension when Easter joy fills a weary world. But for now, for Lent, I will say a quick and quiet “thank you” for the promise of joy that unfolds when slowly and gently, spring comes to ordinary times.

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