

The Prophets of Ordinary Times

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By Lucia A. Silecchia

On Easter Eve, in large cathedrals and small chapels across the country and around the world, thousands of men, women, and youth enter into communion with the Catholic Church. In this difficult season for the Church that I love, the powerful witness of all these who, eyes wide open, say a confident “yes,” celebrate their Baptisms, receive their first Eucharists, and are confirmed with the Holy Spirit is a source of joyful hope. To all of my newest brothers and sisters, welcome!

Some of those who came to the sacred ceremonies of Easter Eve have dramatic stories to tell. An unexpected healing, an inspiring sermon, or a profound intellectual revelation in a brilliantly written text drew some to the path that led them to their new home.

Yet, I am always overwhelmed by the stories told that are so utterly ordinary – stories that show how God so often works through ordinary people and events to draw His family together. For everyone who has a dramatic story to tell, there are countless others with overlooked sacred stories that will never be the stuff of hit movies or best-selling memoirs.

So many times, it is the witness of a seemingly ordinary person that touches the heart and invites another to – or back to – faith. That invitation so often comes from the prophets of ordinary times.

It lies in the witness of co-workers who quietly go to Mass during their lunch break every day. It is found in the patient example of a grandmother whose faith has anchored her family as it weathered a storm. It comes in the unexpected model of a fun-loving college roommate who still made sure he woke up on time for Sunday Mass. It blooms forth in the serenity of a beloved betrothed or spouse – a peace rooted in the faith that is such an integral part of his or her life. It comes silently from the couple in a dingy diner who unobtrusively and naturally bow their heads before lifting their forks. It is the gift of a family in a tiny house whose living room walls hold a sacred picture or two. It is the inspiration of friends whose Christmas cards do not boast of their own accomplishments, but include handwritten notes of praise for the Savior’s birth. It is seen in the quiet compassion of the parish priest who anoints a dying parent with words of hope and peace that a breaking heart yearns to believe. It is inspired by the actions of a shy friend whose convictions strengthen her to speak up with unusual ferocity when she sees the lewd and crude. It is heard in the cry of someone who has suffered a great loss who calls out to God in angst – not taking His name in vain, but in utter confidence and radical

dependence. It is sensed in a coach's careful planning to ensure that team members can worship on Sunday morning – a subtle lesson on priorities for impressionable athletes. It is breathed in the quiet whisper of a friend who promises prayers with the confidence that assures everyone that this promise will be kept. It is observed in the quiet strength of an elderly couple who rarely venture out, but every Sunday like clockwork, walk arm in arm to Mass together with the slow quiet strength that must mean something that the world cannot see.

It is people such as these whose simple lives well lived have drawn new sisters and brothers to the table of our Father this Easter Eve.

To all of these witnesses, thank you! In difficult days, we need you more than ever. From what lies deepest in my heart, thank you for being the prophets of ordinary times.

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