

Advent Newsletter 2015



Dec 13, 2015 Third Sunday of Advent

Bumping into God

We all have wonderful stories to tell of bumping into someone from your grade twelve class, someone you have not talked with for thirty-five years and there you meet her in a Tim Horton's coffee line up. You pay attention and you have so much to catch up on, even if you have both grown a lot older, grayed and put on a lot of weight since high school.



What a difference this makes to your day? Even if you did not have too much in common in high school (the teenage years) you now have so much to talk

about. Do not miss the opportunity that this 'bumping into' can offer.

In our religious life we bump into God. Maybe we have chosen the path to nurse the hurts and resentments that have occurred in our life. Maybe our heart has grown cold to the suffering and the confusion of others.

Our prayer life has suffered neglect. We are so busy with making a living and getting all the things done that we have almost no time for God. We never read and pray the Scriptures any more.

The worst part of this coldness and lack of attention towards God is that we might be feeling okay about our situation. Not to be bothered about our neglect of

God is a sign of how far we have wandered from the path of following God.

We may drift away from God but God never drifts away from us. In fact, the further down we are in our anger, our indifference, the harder God comes to us.

Advent is a gifted time. This is where we are meant to be alert to the ways that God may be trying to reach us.



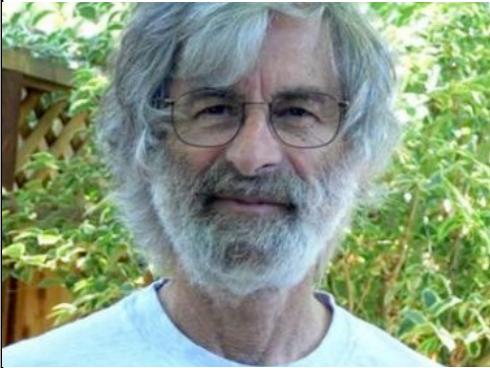
God may not always be nice

People with little experience of the ways of God think that bumping into

God will not hurt or cause our lives to be upset. Maybe we have been away from God for so long that it is like riding your motor cycle West on the 16 highway. You are clocking it at 135 kms. Out of nowhere this violent gust of wind knocks you into the ditch. Could this be a 'bumping into God' moment?

Is this opportunity or rejection?

Everything that happens in life is a decision. Will I make this an opportunity for growth or will I reject the grace that God may be offering at this moment? God is daily breaking into our lives but we will always have the freedom to accept or to reject the movement of God's grace. Perhaps the co-worker who is so discouraged with the collapse of his family life needs someone to listen and understand his situation. What is God asking of you at this moment?



Moses bumped into God in the burning bush

Moses (a sheep farmer) is the classic case of a man who was not looking for God but God was looking for Moses. Unexpectedly (Ex. 3, 1-12) Moses encounters God in the burning bush. It is no more extraordinary than to have a shrub on fire on your lawn. It is in this encounter that Moses is given a mission to free the Hebrew slaves from the hand of Pharaoh in Egypt. God has heard the cry of suffering of his people in their slavery and now he sends Moses to bring them to freedom. Moses bumped into God's plan that completely changed his life. Have you ever encountered God in such a life-changing way?



God's messenger bumps into Mary

We have not paid attention to the ordinariness of Mary's situation. She was a young woman of marriageable age who is confronted by the messenger of God (the angel) with the mission to become mother. We do not give enough attention to how much confusion and doubt there must have been in this young woman's mind. She has been asked to do the impossible. She risks her entire future on the trust of God. She could have walked away. She is reassured that nothing is impossible with God. She accepts "Here I am, the servant of the Lord." Put yourself into Mary's shoes to understand what it means for Mary to bump into God.



Where do we bump into God?

In our life of faith we encounter God in so many different ways. If we are honest we would be certain that we can never nail God down and predict how God will act in our history. To understand how God works try to imagine yourself trying to herd a flock of sparrows. Immediately you would say, 'how impossible that would be.' Trying to control God makes about the same sense as trying to herd a flock of sparrows. God will break into our lives and our task is to pay attention. Be alert at the unexpected coming of God.



God is never God on your terms.....

There is much wisdom in our ancestors. Many of them did not live a carefree

life of faith. There was much struggle and confusion in their efforts to be faithful and follow God in all things. They learnt how to walk with God on the highway of life. There were times of great elation and times of depression, anger and confusion. The one

thing our ancestors in the faith make very clear: God will never be controlled or act according to our script.

This is why we need an Advent season to reflect on the times that we bump into God (and sometimes get knocked flat on our back). These moments when we bump into God always take us out of our comfort zone. We are not in control. God is moving in new directions. Will we have eyes to see these new directions? and the will to follow in these new paths?

This means God being God on God's terms.

Prayer may be a bump moment



When we pray we are not trying to tell God anything or give God directions. It is just the opposite. You pray into God. You pray to listen to the will of God and the directions that God is giving for your life.

This is where we literally bump into God. We find that God may have other plans and directions for our lives. Jesus spent many an hour in prayer(although his prayer was not written down in any of the four gospels). He too sought to find the plan of God for his life and mission. Without a doubt, Jesus also bumped into God in his prayer.

Maybe we are discovering in our prayer that God has other plans for

how we should handle this or that situation?

The bump moment with God may bring healing



There is no one who has not received hurts, disappointments and betrayals in our lifetime. Maybe we carry some very deep scars that will bleed years later once they are bumped. Maybe we continue to nurse the embers of these painful memories and keep them alive and glowing with anger. Here is where God may bump into our lives and hold us through those painful memories.

We bring our hurts toward God in all its pain and ask that God bring

healing to these wounds.

Sometimes we will not make the first move. God will reach down and begin the healing. This is a moment when we bump into God and there is growth, change and a real option for a loving life towards others.



The most common bump

The most common bumping into God will occur when we meet the poor with their many faces. These are the people that we work with, our family and fellow parishioners. This is a moment when the hurting Christ comes to us. This is a moment when we bump into the hurting Jesus who is wounded and unwanted.

How not to miss in in-breaking of God?



Try this learning experience for adults. Have five adults walk through five downtown city blocks. Then bring these five adults back and each person debrief what and who they saw in these five city blocks. No one may interfere in the presentation or give any suggestions. After these five people have given their reports observe how different is the walk of each individuals. One person has seen so much, remembered all the people they encountered and noted the smells along the way. And the next person saw almost nothing!

The five city blocks have not changed! We have missed so much.

Advent is a wake-up call to see what is actually happening. How is God living and moving among us? How are the concerns of God being revealed to us 2015?

The people started asking the correct questions.

In today's gospel selection the ordinary people are catching on. They sense that God is breaking-in to their lives and their society. They ask John the Baptist: What should we do? This is the question for our Advent 2015: What should we be doing today for the unexpected ways that God is breaking into our lives?

Move into God's heart

Our prayer life is meant to bring us into the concerns of God. We are meant to be listening to what weighs heavy on the heart of God. This is not an arrogant attitude but rather moving out of our self-centeredness and into the heart of the divine. If we can hear the concerns of God, where will that lead us to in our actions?

God is moving

What do you do when your live with a restless God?



Our Church needs to educate us to be alert to the movements of God. God is never static or controllable but rather is pushing the edges of our self-centered lives to make real the concerns and compassion of God. Get in touch with the real God who is moving his people to live, love and walk like he does. This is very frightening to the person who thinks they have a good religion and discover that God never acts like they had planned. God always moves us beyond our narrow selves.

Seek to be like the people in front of John the Baptist.

This Sunday stand among the people in front of John the Baptist. They knew something new was about to happen. Enter into the prayer-spirit of Advent which alerts us to the new ways that God will be acting in our lives. Be sensitive to how God may to bumping into you this very week.