

DON'T EVER GIVE UP ON YOUR DREAMS

Yesterday morning around this time I watched the funeral Mass for Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. His son, Father Paul Scalia, a priest of the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia was the main celebrant and homilist. His mom and his eight brothers and sisters were there and four thousand of their closest friends for what Cardinal Wuerl called this simple funeral Mass which the Judge's family had requested. Father Paul Scalia was eloquent, measured prophetic, down-to-earth and funny, true to his dad's spirit. He mentioned an occasion when his father had words with him over all things—confession. Father Paul cited any lawyers present that his father was not dissuaded from going after them or those wearing collars either. His father went to confession. What upset him was that he was waiting in line when it dawned on him that his son was the priest hearing confessions in that confessional. No thank you, the Justice was not having any of that, not a little bit. His son, Father Paul? He wasn't interested a little bit either.

He spoke of his dad because that is how he knew him more than as a Supreme Court Justice. He believed that for his dad, the task of being spouse and father were his most important tasks and then came the law. I thought to myself: "We think we know these people, these celebrities or famous people, and we probably do not." Who knew the Justice Scalia loved being dad, probably granddad too. We think we know what animates these people, their hopes and dreams. But do we? Do we even know ourselves all that well? Our own dreams, our own hopes?

In the Book of Genesis today we hear of the early years of our faith, between 3500 and 4000 years ago. Abram, an old man with no children, leaves his homeland and travels to Haran in what would today be the Turkey/Syria border where ISIS is rampaging, and then on to the Land of Canaan which we call Israel. Abram does this because he has had an encounter with God and God has revealed to him that he will become the father of a great nation even to as many as the stars in the sky. Back then when you could see gazillions of stars that was pretty impressive. Even more impressive was that he believed what he heard and he acted on it although he was 75 years old just a little younger than Justice Scalia was when he died, Abram is just starting out. And although it takes another twenty-five years and a false start or two his wife gives birth to Isaac after her maidservant had given birth to Ishmael, both fathered by Abram. It is to Ishmael that all the Muslims in the world trace their origin to Abram. Today that is roughly 1,750,000,000 people. The Jews and all Christians including Catholics (Totaling 2,275,000,000) trace their origin and ancestry back to Abraham our father in faith through Isaac whose wife had twins, Esau and Jacob. Jacob eventually fathers his twelve sons and changes his name to Israel and as they say the rest is history. Together the Muslims and Jews and Christians added together is over 4,000,000,000 people, more than half the people on earth today. All from Abram. A dreamer. A believer. Like us. Like you. Like me. Like Judge Scalia.

We will probably never know why but it is enough sometimes that we know simply the what of things. Being childless I get Abram a little bit. But there is so much more going on now that we know of through what Abram started and the choice of God to designate the Jews as his Chosen People, eventually came Jesus of Nazareth whom we believe is our Lord and Savior. And Father Paul Scalia was very clear that his father's faith was all about Jesus Christ the one who came to save us from our sins with his wonderful mercy. He asked people not to cheat his father of their prayers because they thought he was a good man. Good man or not, he was every bit a sinner for whom Christ died as any of us are. And Father Paul reminded us how thin the veneer is between life here full of hope and the instantaneous moment of judgment that will come for each of us. A sobering but hopeful reflection

There are moments which touch us and others that move us and some that make us fill up and others that inspire us. On the top of that hill with Peter, James and John Jesus was speaking of all that was

about to unfold to those who were the leaders and closest to him. And then he begins to pray and it is getting late and they each drift off except that suddenly they are awakened and they are dazzled by Jesus who has been transfigured into light and there are two figures with him and intuitively they know they are Moses and Elijah about whom Jesus had been speaking. And then a cloud engulfs them. A low hanging cloud covering the top of the mountain. And then a voice: This IS my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him.” And they are struck speechless. They tell no one until after his death and resurrection from the dead. But they knew. This was no ordinary human being in whom they were placing not only their trust and their hopes but their very lives. A bit overwhelming I think. Ask yourself how you would deal with such an occurrence in your life. Who would you tell? Who would believe you?

Later it would begin to make sense but not now, not yet. Now it was one more thing to take inside their hearts to mull over and look at from all different angles. Why did they believe him? Why put their faith in him? Why do you? Why do I? Why did Judge Scalia? We sense there is something there. Someone there. Something more. Someone more. We sense there is more to this life and that God is part of it. God in the ordinary. That is the heart of our Catholic faith. God in our flesh. That is the meaning of Jesus of Nazareth.

I had a wedding last week and I must say I have probably officiated at over 500 weddings in my life. This couple glowed with their love. Maybe we are supposed to glow. Do we ever even think of the possibility that we can glow? Jesus glowed that night on Mount Tabor. And although I wasn't there I dare say he glowed that first Easter morn when he burst forth triumphant from that tomb alive and risen. Come to think of it I think we are supposed to glow sometimes. I know this—there are days when I celebrate Mass and elevate the host that I feel as if the Lord is glowing right in my hands. The host. The Real Presence. The Living God. Right here in Ambler. In Saint Anthony's. And He comes to us. We receive him. We hold him in our hands. He touches us. He becomes our food. He nourishes us. He transfigures us and we begin to become like him. Eucharist ourselves. Our love nourishes others. Our love shines forth. Our love is visible in our deeds and our relationships no matter who we are or where we live or what our job. Do not be afraid to be holy. Do not be afraid to let your light shine. Your love shine—ever.