

UNEXPECTED MOMENTS

The date was September 20, 2014, a Saturday afternoon around 2pm. I was in the sacristy getting ready for a wedding that was scheduled for three o'clock. The young couple getting married was not from our parish but they were likable young adults and excited about the day. As I was putting in the sacristy and laying out the vestments for the Mass a thought came to me that I should wear the vestments that my mother had made for me as an ordination present in May 1973. Typically I wear them on the anniversary of my ordination. And I wore them for her funeral Mass. But they are old and I don't overuse them. I am not even sure that I use them for family weddings although I may have. Suffice it to say that I wear them infrequently.

My mother surprised me with these vestments at ordination because she had made them out of her wedding dress. It was made of slippered satin and had a long train that became the chasuble that you see me wearing this morning. On that Saturday afternoon, as I was standing in the Narthex shortly before the mothers were escorted down the aisle the mother of the bride commented on my vestments. She said they were very unusual and that they almost looked "bridal." I told her to listen to my homily and all would be revealed. During the homily I told the story of this ordination gift and I referenced how unusual it was for a bridal gown to become Eucharistic vestments. A real transformation. But that is precisely what marriage is—a real transformation, but a slow transformation, of the two into one, of the bride and groom into a couple. Transformation is both the Lord's work and our work. The Lord graces us and we respond to and work with those graces that come to us in any number of ways. My sense was that all present were pleased and delighted with the story and got the point I was trying to make.

Later in the Nuptial Mass I arrived at the prayer of consecration. I held out the host to the bride and groom and to all assembled. "This is my body—for you." I elevated the host high for all to see and before I could even say a word in the interior of my heart I heard a word, as clearly as I am speaking to you now. "She's with me!" "She's with me!" There is not a doubt in my mind that it was Our Lord speaking to my soul. About the state of my mother. She had died on July 24, 2008. It had been a little over six years. But it was undeniable to me that the Lord wanted me to know that my mother was with Him in the kingdom of heaven. Later I told this story to various family members.

I have had time to reflect back on that day. The prompting to wear those vestments which I rarely do was something that set the stage. But I responded to that prompting. We must heed such promptings. They come from deep within us and the one who lives deep within us is the Trinitarian God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are to be attentive to such inner senses. We open ourselves to God in those moments and God will lead us to the particular truth He desires us to know. Listen to today's gospel. "Whoever loves me will keep my word and my Father will love him and WE WILL COME TO HIM AND MAKE OUR DWELLING WITH HIM."

My friends, this has already happened. When we gather here each Sunday we learn how to become more aware and how to become more responsive to the God who lives within our very souls. These things are real. I cannot tell you how many people have told me of instances like the one I described when they heard a word or saw something that they knew came right from God

or a sense began to dawn within them of what God was doing or where God was acting or who should be prayed for. Jesus says that He and the Father and their abiding Spirit will come to us and abide in us and that they will teach us (and there is so much that we still need to be taught, so much that we still need to learn about God and His Ways). And then we are promised his peace. Is that not something that we truly desire and yearn for?

When my mom's birthday or Mother's Day would come around for years we asked her what she wanted as a present. The standard response for many years was the same; "Just some peace and quiet." Apparently there was not much of that going on in our house. A husband, four kids, assorted house guests and a dog will do that. But the Lord gets all that and promises to bring peace to us if we continue to seek to live his way and to put Him first in our lives and in the lives of our family members.

At the deepest part of us is the Indwelling God, the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the Father who made us to begin with. We are invited to believe and we are invited to make a response to the living God by choosing to live the way shown to us by Jesus himself when he walked our earth in the flesh. We don't always feel this presence. We don't always sense the working of God from within. But then there are those occasional moments when we know something more is going on.

Think about the word ABIDE and the word Dwell. Where do you want to abide and how do you want to abide there. Where do you actually dwell? Our God has chosen to throw in with us, to dwell with us, to abide within us so as to heal us, free us and empower us. All of which we need. The question is whether we really believe this or not. I choose to and it makes such a great difference in my life. Let us turn to the Eucharist for the sustaining presence we need to keep us in faith.