

# Glimmers of Grace – Advent, Week 4, 2018

---



- I. Welcome those visiting family for the Holy Days
  - a. This Advent as a parish community we have been reflecting on the theme, “Glimmers of Grace”

## II. Zachery - Home

- a. Zack like most teenage farm boys growing up in rural Illinois
- b. Full of fun, a bit of mischief, restless energy, and a love and loyalty of family to make his parents proud
- c. Zack grew up splitting his time between school, working the family farm, and Church, ....
- d. ....and hunting, fishing, snow-mobiling, and dirt-biking with his brothers.
- e. He grew up close to the soil, and close to God.
- f. Like his brothers, he enjoyed Church, and especially volunteering as an altar server
  - i. He and his brothers used to “fight” with one another to fill in when a server was absent
- g. Together with his eight brothers and sisters, he worked the family grain and livestock farm
- h. His parents taught him the value of an education, and encouraged Zack to get a college education.
- i. And Zack looked forward to the adventure of going off to school.

### III. Zachery – College

- a. After high school, Zack headed off to college to study engineering .
- b. Mindful of the financial burden and burden to the farm, Zack was determined to make the most of school and education.
- c. But college did not live up to his hopes and expectations
- d. Zack is too kind to speak ill of anyone
- e. He simply states facts
- f. “The other students lived by different values than the ones I was raised on.”
- g. Too much partying, drinking, and rough language
- h. He tried to fit in, but became increasingly lonely

### IV. Zachery – The Journey

- a. To stay grounded, Zack began driving home on the weekends to help out on the farm
- b. He found great strength in Church, taking every opportunity to serve at altar when needed
- c. During these trips home, Zack prayed the rosary, as we have prayed here today, and began to develop a deep prayer life, and friendship with Christ

### V. Zachery – Glimmers of Grace

- a. One Sunday, while Zack was finishing homework at the kitchen table, and tried to feel excited about returning to school
- b. His parents sat with him, and asked him how things were going
- c. Zack did his best, put on his best face, and tried to convince his parents—and himself—that all was well

- d. A long silence ensued, while Zack and his mother stared at each other across the family kitchen table.
- e. Finally, Zack' mom broke the silence, and asked, "Son, have you ever thought of being a priest?"
- f. The minute the sound of her question reached Zack's ears, his heart and spirit within him leaped for joy.
- g. Glimmers of Grace
- h. Zack, my wife's cousin, is at MSMary seminary, will be ordained a deacon in a year, and to the priesthood a year later.

- VI. There is a pattern to the way God speaks with and touches our hearts, and one of the most frequent ways is through another.
  - a. In our trial and celebrations, in our sorry and in our joy,
  - b. God does not leave us alone
  - c. But sends another to be His presence, to offer a glimmers of His Grace, someone to make the journey with us

- VII. We see that in today's Gospel
  - a. Mary, a young girl, has received the gift of life miraculously from the Holy Spirit, and is carrying the Son of God
  - b. We can only begin to imagine the emotions, joy, fears, and challenges Mary and her betrothed Joseph are facing.
  - c. In His very offer to Mary, God provides someone to journey with Mary, her cousin, Elizabeth:
    - i. someone who can relate to a miracle conception and birth of a holy child,
    - ii. and journey with her through her physical and spiritual needs, ..... to be for her
    - iii. a Glimmer of Grace

- d. and the moment Mary's greeting reaches Elizabeth's ears
- e. the infant in her womb, John the Baptist, leaps for Joy.

- VIII. God's intervention in our lives, to send us a glimmer of His grace through another, is a pattern throughout the Church's history
- a. To the young St. Francis of Assisi, troubled and challenged by his vision to rebuild the Church, God sends St. Clare
  - b. To another Francis, St. Francis de Sales, who is in the throes of criticism, even from his brother bishops, for his radical steps to call everyone—not just clerics and religious—to a life of holiness, God sends St. Jane de Chantal, a widowed mother of four, who shared de Sales vision, and with him founds the Order of the Visitation.
  - c. To St. Katharine Drexel, mourning the death of her father, discerning a call to contemplative religious life, troubled by the treatment of Native and African Americans, and challenged by Pope Leo to be a missionary, God sends Bishop James O'Connor to guide the talented Mother Katharine into a life of revolutionary service, and the founding of a new order.

- IX. And we see God's pattern of sending Glimmers of Grace through another
- a. Right here in the saints of our own parish community
  - b. Through the witnesses who shared their encounters with Glimmers of Grace before each Advent Mass
    - i. Whether it be prayers and comfort for a family journeying through a terminal illness
    - ii. An openness to responding to God's "Shoulder Tap"

- iii. Someone donating the funds for the life-saving surgery of someone they have never met
- iv. The voice of child encouraging conversation between divorced parents
- c. In each of these witnesses we discover God's Glimmer of Grace shining through another,
- d. And through their witnessing, they have become Glimmers of Grace to us all.

X. And that's why we are here.....

- a. As a parishioner recently said to me,
- b. "This is why we NEED Church, why we gather every Sunday
- c. To encourage one another, to strengthen one another
- d. To be Glimmers of Grace for one another."

XI. We are about to celebrate the greatest Glimmer of Grace of all

- a. The birth of our Savior, the Christ
- b. Born to Mary and Joseph, in poverty, lying in a manger
- c. Like the Christmas Carol proclaims,  
"In all our trials, born to be our friend."
- d. Born to be our Glimmer of Grace itself.

XII. In His Love and Goodness, God repeats the nativity for this parish community each and every Mass

- a. As Mary Brockway, who knew St. Katharine Drexel in life, and ministered to all of us as a Glimmer of Grace, once taught me:
- b. "Isn't God Wonderful  
In each and every Eucharist

God gives us a glimpse of heaven, (a Glimmer of Grace), to encourage us along on our journey.”

- c. In the nativity of the Eucharist, we receive Grace itself, and become Glimmers of Grace to one another, and to the world beyond our Church doors.

XIII. The Fourth Week of Advent in our parish this year will last no more than 65 hours

- a. But that’s plenty of time to be a Glimmer of Grace to someone else.
  - i. A friend or relative in mourning at this time of year
  - ii. A youth or young adult looking for someone to care and listen to them
  - iii. Someone you’ve been meaning to speak to for a long time
  - iv. Someone who needs financial or emotional support
  - v. Someone you need to forgive, or someone whose forgiveness you need – or perhaps –
  - vi. A neighbor you’d like to invite to join us at Christmas Mass

XIV. In this Fourth Week of Advent

- a. Imitation of Mary and Elizabeth
- b. Make an effort to reach out to someone,
- c. To offer our love, and
- d. May our Greeting, like Mary’s be the Glimmer of Grace that causes someone’s heart to leap for joy.