

Cornerstone

Catholic
Community
of St. Timothy

March 2017

Editor's Corner



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

We spent three nights in Bismarck, ND over Christmas during the blizzard called Europa, which closed the entire length of I-94 from Fergus Falls, MN to the Montana border. We were able to slip and slide on icy streets to get to Mass on Christmas morning at the cathedral. The younger priest drew the short straw for the 11:30 a.m. liturgy, and my expectations of listening to a thought-provoking homily were low. However, he surprised me with his theme of explaining to us how we needed light to grow and thrive, using a science project of growing beans in a dark cupboard versus a lighted greenhouse. The words at the beginning of John's gospel that the priest read describe Jesus being the light of the world that we need to follow to live.



Over thirty years ago, I moved from my long time hometown and large family in Montana to a new life and better opportunities in Minnesota. The mining city simply did not have the possibilities of employment for both my wife and myself. My journey eastward was just over 1000 miles and a slight cultural change – we learned to say, “eh?” I can hardly imagine Fr. George moving 8000 miles and experiencing the huge cultural change from India to the United States! He was with us for a short time, but made a great impression – especially with our younger parishioners, which is why the parish instituted the Fr. George Kolath Scholarship.



In my work I manage the installation of network computer equipment, and I have three engineers who live in India who design the network, order the gear, test the connectivity and

change the software as needed. Harish, Pradeep and Anupam join my conference calls and direct our techs, who are onsite somewhere in the U. S. mainland. Their distinctive accents remind me of Fr. George's speech patterns. These three wise men from the east light up my equipment like Fr. George shone in our lives. He liked to preface his homilies with a little joke, and often ran them past Deacon Kevin Jents – just to make sure that they were appropriate.



After Fr. George died, a few of the choir members realized that his jacket still hung in the room in church where small groups practice before Mass. They had it dry-cleaned and it remains on the coat rack in his memory. He also brought back from India some of the three dimensional stars that hang by St. Tim's windows at Christmas time.

During the long nights spent in Bismarck, I wondered:

*How will we be stars that shine in the days and nights ahead?
How will we imitate Christ's light for others?*

Tim Downey
Winter 2017



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Greetings!

My name is Erin Kelly and I am thrilled to be able to introduce myself as the new Youth Minister for St. Tim's. I have worked for 10 years as a middle school counselor in the Anoka-Hennepin school district, and am excited for this new opportunity to continue my passion of working with young people. I have been a part of the St. Timothy Community for much of my life, and I look forward to building new relationships and being a part of the faith journey with the young adults and parents of this parish.



I keep busy with two children, Mareena (6) and Myla (3), and I have been married for 11 years to my high school sweetheart, Justin Kelly. Our family loves anything outdoors and active! I am a graduate of Blaine High School, and attended the College of St. Benedict/St. Johns University for my undergraduate studies in Psychology and the University of Wisconsin River Falls to obtain my Master's Degree in School Counseling.

I look forward to this new venture with your support and companionship!

Youth Group: Youth Group began again on February 1st and we will continue with regularly scheduled Wednesday meetings. This will be a time for faith sharing and community building for young adults. Please watch the bulletin for more specific information regarding future times and dates.

Youth Events and Activities: We are currently planning upcoming events for our young people in grades 6-12. We greatly appreciate your participation in these events and would also love your input in planning the best opportunities for young adults to build community and live out their faith.

We are currently looking for middle and high school volunteers to participate in our Good Friday prayer service, Living Stations of the Cross. We will have both non-speaking actors and narrator parts to help tell the story of Jesus' journey to Calvary. Please contact me if you're interested, and watch for more information regarding our rehearsal schedule.

Check out the St. Timothy Youth page of our website (churchofsttimothy.com) and be sure to like, follow, and share the new St. Timothy Youth Ministry facebook page to receive updates on Fun Youth Events, Volunteer Opportunities, and Youth Group Meetings.

Contact Information: I always look forward to visitors, and you may contact the parish office for my weekly schedule. ekelly@churchofsttimothy.com
763-784-1329



I celebrated Thanksgiving with most of my brood this year, and before the meal time prayer I reminded everyone why we were celebrating this day. I then asked those who were present what they were most thankful for. In unison, they shouted, "family!"

This kind of summed it up for me as well, but I continued by asking them what other things should we be thankful for on this day, and every day the "Good Lord" grants us.

After a short time for reflection we developed quite a list.

Starting with Grand Pa here are some of the responses that were offered.

I am thankful for indoor plumbing. Twenty below zero weather makes one mighty grateful for John Crapper's invention.

I'm thankful for front wheel drive cars. Remember when you had to put your snow tires on every November.

I'm thankful for thermal-lined Gortex water proof boots. Do you remember wearing three pair of wool socks and how your feet still got cold when wet?

I am thankful for AC. I remember sleeping on a linoleum floor in front of a window praying for a breeze on hot summer nights.

I'm thankful for being born in the U. S. A. Can you imagine living in Europe in World War II?

I'm thankful for Micro-wave ovens. It took so long to make popcorn and you burned it half the time, and broke your teeth on the "old maids."

I'm thankful for the electricity. It was awfully dark in a farm house and you couldn't read when the sun went down.



I'm thankful for natural gas furnaces. It seems like my brother and I were always splitting wood when we would have rather watched the Green Bay Packers on TV.

I'm thankful for TV as well. What a miracle it was to see pictures on a screen with your favorite TV stars entertaining you and your family on cold winter nights in January.

I'm thankful that we live in a Democracy where we can vote out the bone heads who messed up our last 4 -8 years by making lousy decisions that affected our livelihood.

I'm thankful for the wonderful company I lucked into joining after I got out of college which made it possible to meet wonderful friends and be able to retire to a comfortable life before I was 60.

I'm thankful for the lakes and rivers that existed where I have lived so I could enjoy the many hours on the water boating, canoeing, fishing and swimming.

I am thankful for the abundance of vegetables I can grow and consume from my garden. What a bounty the Lord has provided us in the fertile upper mid-west.

I am thankful for electric toasters, for I can remember burning bread on a wood stove.

I am thankful for toilet paper. The Sears catalog, peach wrappings and corncobs were poor substitutes.

I am thankful for toothpaste. Arm and Hammer baking soda or salt doesn't make your breath minty fresh and whiten your teeth.

I am thankful for having lived in a time when we saw a man rocketed to the moon and back. Now if I only could get to Minneapolis and St. Paul in rush hour traffic without someone giving me the "one- finger salute."

I'm particularly thankful for having lived long enough to see my children grow up and have children of their own, who are delightful to be around in short bursts of glorious noise.

I'm very thankful for finding a woman who would marry me, who turned out to be such a wonderful companion and mother. Now if I could only convince her to go to the hardware store with me.

I am thankful for having good health and the genes that will enable me, if the Good Lord willing, to see many of my great grand children born.

I am especially thankful to God for giving us his only begotten son, Jesus. Who has shown us the truth the light and the way, so that someday we may join him and all who have gone before us in the Glory of God.

This holiday season I would like to leave you with a story that I have shared before, but bears repeating.

During the hunting season of 1974 my brother, Ric and I were having a beer in the Midway Bar in our hometown when he asked me the following question. "Gary, did you ever tell Dad you loved him?" It caught me a little by surprise so I paused to think, and then replied. "I suppose I did when we were little kids.

Probably when he tucked us into bed after he said our prayers with us and gave us a kiss on the cheek.

But he quit doing that when we were about eight years old, and I don't think I have even hugged him since." Ric, went on. "Well,

Thanksgiving is coming up and you are the oldest. Why don't you get up before dinner and tell him from all of us how much we love and appreciate him." So, I did.



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He seemed a little embarrassed and it was especially awkward when I tried to hug him and we just bumped bellies, but I saw a little tear in his eye, or at least I would like to think I did. Eleven months later my Dad died when a tractor rolled over on him. And although it was a tragedy that I never will completely get over, I'm ever so grateful for my brother who suggested I tell our father that we loved him, because if I had waited it was possible that I would never have gotten the chance.

So, whatever you do, tell all those who are close to you that you love them, because you never know if you will get the chance again.

Gary Buhr

Parish Pastoral Council

Your Parish Council would like the members of St. Timothy's community to know that they are always open and available to talk. If you need to share an idea or concern, please know they will always be available for you. Below is a list of the current members along with their phone numbers.

Gerald Arel (Chairperson)	763-780-7360
Jim Aune (Vice Chair)	763-717-7044
Dave Falkner (Trustee).....	763-785-0539
Terry Pierce (Trustee).....	763-786-3111
Gary Buhr (Member at large).....	763-783-7428
Betty Johnson (Member at large)	763-786-8372
Rick Matlon (Member at large).....	763-785-2423
Anne Kocon (Member at large).....	763-780-4932
Gary Ackerman (Member at large)	763-807-4510
Patrick Brandt (Member at large).....	763-780-7292
Father Joe Whalen (Pastor)	763-784-1329

Grounded in Faith

I bought my first share in a flying machine as a senior in high school in 1981. Three older brothers and I pooled \$800 each to purchase a powered hang glider kit from a place called Northern Sun Ultralights in St. Paul.



Once it was put together we would take turns flying over rural South East Minnesota landscapes a dozen or more days each summer. From a standpoint of “nature appreciation” and “simplicity at its finest,” the ultralight offered a nearly unobstructed view of God’s ultimate canvas below with the exception of your dangling legs and tricycle landing wheels suspended on aluminum tubing. The wheels were a significant improvement to the powered hang gliders of the 70’s which required use of your own legs for take-offs and landings. (Not Recommended.)

The view from a thousand feet or more in the air when looking down was always more than enough to make me think of God, and always just scary enough to make me say the Pilot’s Prayer – especially if the air got bumpy and you had forgotten to say it prior to take off.

Our flying machine was as simple as possible, and would have been what the Wright Brothers built themselves had they lived in modern times. With no control stick or foot pedals to tend, the pilot could take in more of the flora and fauna and rolling landscapes of Minnesota instead of monitoring gauges and artificial horizons on a dashboard.

Flying at a normal air speed of 25 mph in a craft weighing 170 pounds including the 15 horsepower “go kart” engine and fuel, some pilots even outweighed the weight of the aircraft (FYI, not I.) Flying into a gentle but steady breeze you often flew slower than someone could run on the ground below you.

Late on one hot summer afternoon a group of onlookers wearing bathing suits gathered at the airfield after a day of swimming at the local pool. With the temperature still around 90 degrees, a common question from these observers was why we would chose to fly in slacks on such a hot day (even bell bottoms for one of us – left over from the previous decade.) We would explain to them that when landing, adequate air speed was critical to prevent a stall (and resultant crash) when close to the ground. Since the craft had no instruments - air speed indication or otherwise, you would look down - with great attentiveness - and watch the ground approach as you came in for a landing. As long as the cuffs on your pants continued to flap in the breeze, you were assured you had adequate air speed and could make a safe landing. Thus, although not flying by the “seat of our pants,” our pants, practice, regular aircraft inspections, and faith - all played a critical role in our flying endeavors.

Sometimes, in faith, I feel like I’m flying by the seat of my pants. I may question where I am at – personally – in my faith while listening to the readings or the homily at Mass. Often, in response to this self-reflection, I come to realize I need to return to the basics.

If not properly grounded, I try to remind myself to keep my head down until on the ground again. Then, to stay properly grounded, I remind myself who made this beautiful world - along with everything in the universe. Who’s really in control, and whose work am I here to do?



Then, before the next flight:

- Bell bottom pants – check.
- Aircraft thoroughly inspected – check.
- Pilot’s prayer – check.

Oh God, watch over me and keep me safe as I take to the skies.

Keep the engine running and wings level as I admire your beautiful work below.

Return me gently to the ground when my flight is done.

Help me to appreciate your creations and never take life for granted.

Ken Langr

Mass Confusion

I’ve been taught since my earliest recollections of my religious education that the Immaculate Conception refers to Mary’s conception and birth without the stain of original sin in the womb of her mother, St. Anne, and not the conception of Jesus in his virgin mother. Yet it seems to me that most people, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, believe that it refers to the latter. I’ve always found it hard to understand how this misconception could be so prevalent.



Yet this past December, while attending morning Mass here at St. Tim’s on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, I noted with some surprise that the Gospel reading, the homily, and the lyrics of most of the songs dealt with Jesus’ conception in the womb of the Blessed Virgin. In fact, reference to Mary’s conception without original sin was made only twice in the prayers of the mass that I caught.

Now, the readings and lessons of that Holy Day were obviously neither wrong nor inappropriate. The conceptions of Mary and Jesus without original sin are a fundamental aspect of our faith. But the focus on the latter aspect of the story on the feast day celebrating the former aspect may go a long way in explaining confusion regarding the Immaculate Conception.

This illustrates that not all aspects of what we believe or do as Catholics are crystal clear. This is not the first time I’ve been confused about some aspect of my Catholic faith. As I grow

older, I keep forgetting more and more, and people seem to keep changing the things I thought I knew. That combination does little to help me avoid confusion. There may be times when we are confused about some aspects of our faith, or about the things we do and say as we come together to express that faith. We as Catholics enjoy a rich and intricate tapestry in how we celebrate and worship. That tapestry can be more beautiful as we grow in understanding it.

In his Epiphany homily, Deacon Tom spoke of several principles that underpin our common spiritual journey. One of those principles was our access to resources that help guide us on that journey, sacred scripture and the teachings of the Church among them. We are exposed to scripture at every Mass, and the Priest or Deacon offer a practical interpretation of the readings in their homily. We are exposed to the teachings of the Church in the Faith Formation classes we attend. But what about our continuing education once we've passed our school years?

St. Tim's offers a wide variety of adult education and enrichment opportunities. Most of these offerings are publicized in the bulletin. In this age of technology, we have at our fingertips a wealth of information that can help us on our spiritual journey. There is an excellent list of resources with links available on St. Timothy's website (www.churchofsttimothy.com). The Liturgy and Music section under the Resources tab provides a full page of links, with many of these acting as gateways to a wealth of worthwhile information. I was delighted with the information available under the Prayer and Worship tab via the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops link, where rationale for the rituals, words and gestures used during Mass is often provided along with the instruction itself. And of course, we have a committed and caring staff that is more than willing to assist in finding the answers to any questions we may have.



It is our responsibility, as Deacon Tom pointed out, to avoid letting our spiritual journey become a spiritual campsite. Actively pursuing continuing education as Catholic Christians is perhaps the best way for us to avoid "Mass Confusion."

John Paul

A Simple Blessing



Early this past December, we shared a meal at our home with friends Tim and Nancy Downey. This meal has become an annual tradition for us, enabling us to pause and enjoy a relaxing evening together early in an often too-busy season. Typically, either Marianne or I offer an extemporaneous blessing before the meal, or occasionally, read from a book of established prayers. This time, I wrote

a short blessing that I read before the meal. Afterward, Tim and Nancy requested that I share it in Cornerstone.

By way of explanation, the main course for the meal was a roast from the black bear I had taken earlier in the year. Additionally, just days earlier, our 17 year old grandson Riley had a significant car accident from which he escaped with relatively minor injuries, this followed the recent death of two local teens in a car accident.

The format for the blessing is certainly not my own, but it worked well to express the thoughts that I wanted and needed to share as we began our meal.

John Paul

Lord,

Thank you for the gift of enduring friendship... but let us remember those who are friendless and alone.

Thank you for the gift of loving families... but let us remember those whose families are broken, or who are separated by overwhelming distance or difference.

Thank you for our homes and our neighbors... but let us remember those who are homeless, or who live where danger or fear prevail.

Thank you for allowing us to live in freedom... but help us to remember the responsibilities that this entails, not only for our immediate wants and needs, but for future generations.

Thank you for watching over Riley in his time of distress... but let us remember the families of those whose errors or misfortunes have resulted in more severe and lasting consequences.

Thank you for means to pursue and enjoy recreational pastimes... but let us remember those who must struggle just to survive.

Thank you for the food we are about to eat, and for the majestic animal that helps to nourish us... and help us to be responsible stewards of all the earth's resources.

Bless us and the meal we share... and make us truly grateful for all the gifts you have given us.

Amen





Guardian Angels

We adopted our two year old Chinese daughter in May of 1997 and returned to the United States in early June. We had two biological sons already, so we only qualified for adoption of a child from China who was designated to have special (medical) needs. Hui Hui Guo (now Hannah Joy Langr,) was identified as having a heart murmur typical of a congenital heart defect known as a ventricular septal defect or VSD.

A ventricular septal defect is a small hole between two chambers of the heart that affects the ability of the heart to pump blood properly. Not rare, but not common either, this congenital defect in infants often heals itself during the first few months after birth. In the case of some children the hole does not heal, and can get larger with time - seriously affecting the child's rate of growth and then eventually resulting in death if not surgically repaired.

Since I had good medical coverage through my employer, Cindy and I felt that our chance to adopt Hui Hui was a match made in heaven. Although a serious heart defect, open heart surgery was normally successful in correcting this defect. We had also been told that open heart surgery might not be made available to a young child orphan in China (in 1997) although we did not know for sure if that was true.

Our daughter first saw a hematologist regarding her blood work. The hematologist seemed more concerned about Hannah's heart murmur than an iron deficiency, and stated that it was not the typical murmur of a VSD, and that there could be an additional heart problem in addition to a VSD. He recommended that we follow up with the cardiologist "sooner, versus later" especially given that Hannah had stopped gaining weight, and was at the low end of normal for a 27 month old toddler.



We then travel from Ashland, Wisconsin to Duluth, Minnesota to see a cardiologist from Children's hospital who was available only one day each month to see patients. On our first visit to see Dr. Bertrand, we told him about the hematologist's concern - which caused him to chuckle at the thought of a hematologist (not a cardiologist,) with just a stethoscope conjecturing more than a typical VSD. However, after listening to our daughter's heart for a little while, and then for a little while longer, and then a third time - he took on a humbled look and stated that the hematologist was likely correct, and that there was likely more than one heart defect in need of repair.

Unfortunately, the echocardiogram (ultrasound of the heart) completed that day would only show the presence of a ventricular septal defect in need of repair, but nothing else. Monthly visits would then follow, with repeat echocardiograms to try to locate a second defect, but without success. On the third visit,

Hannah was even sedated in hopes that the quality of the test would be improved.

Meanwhile, I received a job offer for a different position I had interviewed for months earlier, but had long since written off. Cindy and I talked about the opportunity, prayed about it, and decided we would move. It was early December in 1997, when we made our fourth trip west to Duluth on a treacherous Wisconsin State Highway 2 with Hannah to see Dr. Bertrand. She had been our daughter for 6 months, was almost 3 years old, and was still unable to reach 25 pounds. The previous week we had finalized her adoption in county court, made an offer on a different house in a different state, and had just avoided several deer vs. car episodes in the deer crossing zone - aka the State of Wisconsin.



During her fourth echocardiogram as Dr. Bertrand oversaw the process, he stated with excited relief, "there it is!" "She has an atrial septal defect (ASD) of several millimeters diameter in addition to the VFD." He continued, "We now have what we need on video tape to plan her surgery. I can take this tape back to my other colleagues at Children's Hospital and we can plan her open heart surgery. We will likely be able to repair both defects in a single surgery." With similar excited relief Cindy and I asked, where - and when?

He suggested not waiting too long because of her failure to gain weight and the size and severity of the two heart defects, and he followed with, "It will have to be in Minneapolis, at Children's Hospital- and she may have to stay a week or two - depending on how the surgery and recovery goes."

As I responded, I felt that there was another presence in the room - perhaps Hannah's guardian angel. Perhaps it was Cindy's guardian angel, or mine? I smiled at Dr. Bertrand as I said "I just took a new job in Minneapolis and we bought a house there. We'll be moving next month." "Look me up when you get settled, and we'll get Hannah scheduled for surgery," he responded as he left the room with the videotape.



The trip back to Ashland, Wisconsin that day took on a different feel. I had a feeling of relief, hope and anticipation for our future. About the third time I slammed on the brakes to avoid several more white tail deer, I smiled and wondered if perhaps those deer had guardian angels as well.

Ken Langr

Understanding Islam



In November, Zafar Siddiqui came to speak at St. Timothy's. Zafar grew up in India where he attended a Catholic school through twelfth grade. He is also the co-founder of Islamic Resources Group. The goal of the group is to build bridges

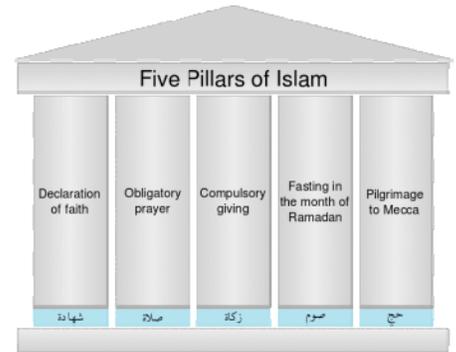
of understanding between Muslims and the greater community. Using his multicultural and multi-religious background, he talked about the framework to finding common ground and connections. The Quran tells people of the Book to come to common terms and worship one God. We are to find this common ground by conducting respectful dialogues with each other.

Islam is a religion. The word Islam is derived from the Arabic word s-l-m (salam) meaning peace. Islam is about belief in and submission to one God. Muslim refers to the followers of Islam. The word Muslim means "one who submits to God." Approximately 1.6 billion of the world's population is Muslim. One percent of all Muslims live in the United States. In Minnesota alone, there are approximately 140,000. Muslims and Catholics combined make up half of the world's population. We, collectively have a great responsibility to the world.

We can set an example by building bridges making change and encouraging peace. Zafar cautioned us that when we hear things about the Islamic faith we should ask ourselves if it is religion or culturally based. An example is the head covering or hijab, worn by most Muslim women. While not exclusive to Muslims, hijabs are religious. The hijab is worn by divine command as a sign of modesty and submission. However, women not being allowed to drive has no place in religion. That is a cultural belief. That did not come from the Quran.

Like the Bible, the Quran is about peace. There is also judgment and violence in both books. Both are subject to things being taken literally and out of context. Islam teaches that God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Master Regulator of the Universe. God, or Allah which is the Arabic word for God, has no gender and is always singular. ONE God. They do not believe in the Trinity. God is the single source of peace. Satan is considered a Djinn. Djinns have free will. Muslims believe we are accountable to God for our actions. Angels submit to God and do not have free will. Prophets including Muhammad, Jesus and Abraham are God's messengers sent to the whole nation. All the prophets are loved equally and belief in all prophets is crucial. Jesus is considered a prophet, not the son of God. It is

believed that the Messiah will return, but which prophet they consider to be the Messiah is a bit unclear. It is also their belief that people are to be judged by their righteousness. Those who are the most righteous are the most honored. Mary is considered the most righteous woman, the most holy and honored woman in history.



There are five pillars of Islam. The first is the declaration of faith by stating the belief in one God. The second is going to Mosque and praying five times per day. The prayers are done wherever you are at the time. The third pillar is mandatory Alms. The alms should be 2.5% of the money you have in your savings. The fourth pillar is Fasting. It is believed that fasting helps you attain piety, build willpower, feel compassion and reflect on one's self. The final pillar is Pilgrimage. At least one time in your life you are to visit Mecca. There is a structure there that is believed to be built by the prophet Abraham and his sons.

I enjoyed the way Zafar presented the information and took time to answer questions from those present. Two things I liked from the conversation were that the word for spouse is "halila" meaning protector. This is used for both male and female. The other thing was when he was talking about the prayer time. The first time to pray is before sunrise to invite God into your heart and day. The last prayer time is right before you go to bed to return your heart and focus to God. While Islam is vastly different from Catholicism, they are both a way of life. We believe in one God. We believe in peace and treating others as the blessings that God has given us. We have a responsibility to spread God's love and peace. Let us learn, make connections and build bridges of understanding.

As-Salamu alaykum "Peace be with you"

Jeanette Masloski

Assumptions



We've all made assumptions at various times, and likely have been embarrassed on some occasion after realizing that our assumption was completely off base. Perhaps our assumption ended up causing hurt. Or perhaps we were lucky, and a poor assumption didn't result in anyone getting hurt – at least at the time.

If you play cards for fun and this habit of poor assumption making rules its ugly head as over bidding, this overconfidence or self-centered attitude doesn't necessarily cause much harm (other than slowly but surely whittling down the number of people who want to play cards with you.) However, in other situations and other walks of life, this hubris or cavalier attitude can be harmful to self and others.

During this last season of Advent, I've thought a lot about being prepared, and cautioned myself not to assume I was doing enough to be the hands and feet of Christ. After all, there is a lot more at stake than in a card game.

We are hoping to honor and please our creator by doing the work that Christ told us needs to be done, and the bible tells us to be prepared. Yet, as humans and sinners, I don't think any one of us can ever say that we feel fully prepared.



I remember a time from my childhood when I thought I had everything figured out for a specific action, and had thought of every possible contingency. I was about 8 or 9 years old, and my parents were going somewhere for the evening. Thus, I thought it might be an opportunity to “act out,” without getting punished. I decided I was going to spray my older brother David with water from a water gun and then quickly retreat into the bathroom where I could lock the door and wait as long as necessary for his urge to render corporal punishment on me subsided. Perhaps back then as the youngest of six kids I longed for attention – even if it was of the negative variety.

I was confident that I had thought of every conceivable problem with this plan. I verified the bathroom was unoccupied and that I had a clear and unobstructed route for escape through the dining room and kitchen. David was practicing sousaphone, which meant he would have to lift the large coiled brass instrument off his shoulder and over his head, and then carefully set it down prior to beginning chase. Thus, this head start would guarantee my beating him to the bathroom where I could seek temporary asylum. If he was more patient than I after the attack, I planned to open the window and escape to the back yard and surrounding neighborhood where several other excellent hiding places were available.



I remember a feeling of satisfaction as I unloaded an extra-large cow syringe full of water directly into David's face before making a run for the bathroom (no, there were no “super soaker” squirt guns back then. A large cow syringe was the Cadillac of water guns at the time.) At the entrance to the bathroom door I actually had time to stop and look at David as he came around the far corner a good 20 feet behind me. There was even time for a verbal taunt before I flew into the bathroom and slammed the door.

What happened next was still one of those times in life that you never forget. As I tried to secure the sliding bolt to lock the door, as if in slow motion - the door left its hinges and continued its rotation. The door finally came to a rest diagonally across the door frame. I looked at David in confusion across the breached opening to see him still wet, but grinning from ear to ear. He then raised his hand which held both hinge pins for the bathroom door.

Although I may believe some days that I'm fully prepared for a meeting at work, or with my latest tax return by the time April 15 comes along, I know I can never assume that I'll be prepared to meet my maker. But for some reason that makes me want to keep trying harder – instead of giving up.

I think it's like in college when I knew I was going to do poorly on a test. I didn't stop studying - but tried even harder to find opportunities to study. Sometimes I would discover that I did better than I thought I could (grace.) And other times, I found out I scored much worse than expected, but was relieved to find out that everyone had failed the test and the professor had decided to grade on a curve – and pass me anyway (mercy.)

Therefore, I know and want to continue to try to be prepared because, after all, there is a lot more at stake than a grade on a test in one class or a friendly game of cards. Stay prepared and continue to prepare the way.

And for those of you wondering the price of under estimating an older brother back in the early 1970's – for me it was several hard – but not too hard - punches in the shoulder, and a toilet swirly. I suppose it could have been a lot worse.



Ken Langr