

**I have a Friday Friend...**

**Each Friday for over a year now, I watch our youngest grandson Percy,  
while his parents are at work.**

**They live and work in the city, so I leave the house around 6 or 6:15 in the morning and  
drive to the west loop...sometimes it's 45 minutes...sometimes it can be an hour and a half!**

**Well...a few weeks ago, we were having heavy, icy rain  
and the expressways were jammed...**

**I started out earlier than usual but even then I had to call my son in law to tell him I was  
probably going to be late...gratefully, he has a flexible job.**

**So there I am on the Stevenson expressway inching along at about 5mi/hr...rain coming  
down...a gazillion cars going nowhere fast in both directions...**

**with gloomy dark rain clouds in all directions...**

**I felt impatience and frustration creeping in...**

**And then I see it...right in front of me...**

**well perhaps a little to my left,**

**but there is a break in the clouds!**

**I see blue sky and the golden glow of the sunrise on the tips of those dark gloomy clouds...**

**Ahh...such beauty...such a gift!**

**All I could do is smile!**

**I was actually thankful that I was going 5 miles an hour so I could just watch it!**

**The rest of my commute was slow...it continued to rain...**

**but it was all ok...**

**I had been reminded that the sun still shown and**

**there was blue sky just on the other side of the clouds.**

**I had been given a gift that warmed my heart**

**and brought a smile to my face...**

**In our reading today, Cleopas and his companion were sad and hugely disappointed.  
They had hoped that Jesus was the one to redeem Israel and  
those hopes had been crushed...**

**They were walking home in sadness and despair,  
they thought all was lost...  
but lo and behold...who starts to walk with them?  
but Jesus himself!  
but they didn't know it....  
they were so wrapped up in their sorrow and despair..**

**But once they sat at table with him...  
once he blessed and broke the bread,  
their eyes were opened!  
they recognized him....and he vanishes from their sight.**

**Then they remember....Then they say to each other:  
“Were not our hearts burning within us”**

**It wasn't until he was gone from their site that Cleopas and his companion ...  
remember that deep interior feeling they had felt  
Then they recognized it as a sign that something wonder-full had taken place...**

**Why does life have to be like that?  
Why is it that most of the time it isn't until after the fact when we finally recognize  
the gift, the miracle that is being offered..**

**That Friday morning I spoke about .... I was fortunate...  
most of the time I'm not as attentive...**

**And perhaps that is true for you.**

**Most of the time we are not attentive because we are so caught up  
in either the past or the future.**

**We are caught up the busyness of life,  
we caught up in our schedules, our agendas, our problems,  
our disappointments,  
our fears and our sadness....**

**We are so caught up that we completely miss the gifts we are being given**

**sometimes perhaps... later on,  
we might remember a tingling...  
a gut feeling... our hearts trembling that was  
our sign that there was something grace-filled happening...  
but we don't see notice then..**

**Most of the time it's not until we stop and pause  
that we recognize the grace, the miracle that was being offered  
right then and there**

**Now...I know there is a lot of talk about mindfulness everywhere these days...  
It is now fashionable to be talking about it...**

**But there is actually a very good reason for all of this hubbub...**

**When we practice being in the present moment...  
when we practice not being in our past disappointments  
or future hopes...  
we see the beauty and miraculousness of the present....**

**When we stop, breathe deeply and truly see...  
not just with our physical eyes,  
but with the eye of our heart...  
we will see that new life possible in any situation:  
~we may notice ourselves finding new strength or new patience  
during a trying time in our lives.  
~we may notice the kindness of others as we struggle with a loss or an illness...  
~we may even find blue sky and sunshine amidst stormy clouds...**

**Beauty is every where...  
Hope is possible in all things...  
and we are called to be witnesses to it all...  
We are called to be here...now...  
so we can feel the burning of our hearts...  
so that we can notice presence of the Holy...**

**We live in a mysterious world...  
We live in a world that is fragile and broken,  
We live among people who are caught up in their own fears and agendas  
and who create suffering and tragedy for others...  
And yet...each of us....all of us...  
have the Holy walking right next to us  
on the highways of our everyday lives...  
Where ever life take us...  
there are gifts of grace and beauty  
new life and new hope breaking through the storm clouds of our lives...  
just waiting to be recognized....**

**We are called to be present to keep our eyes and our hearts wide open...  
we are called to pay attention to the burning of our hearts**

**so that we might forever and in all things say: Thank you! Amen.**