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His presence in my life.” (PAUSE) I didn’t write that. The Holy Spirit wrote it through me.

I am fortunate, due to the loving generosity of my husband to have gotten out of the insurance claims business, and for the last five years, I have been able to work in a lovely little shop selling teddy bears and collectibles, scooping ice cream and selling cards and candy. It has been in the shop that I have noticed how “God-speak” has crept into my language. I listen to people’s stories and share mine. I ask them if I might pray for them, and they are inevitably pleased and thankful. I find myself saying thing like “God bless your heart”, “Praise Jesus”, and “God will provide” when I am speaking.

I find I see God in all things. This Fall I was mowing the lawn and came running in screaming, “Kurt, God gave us an owl!” It was a really truly Eastern Screech Owl, and it lived in a hole in the tree in our front yard through the Fall and most of the winter. How cool is that?! And I thanked God for him every morning as I pulled out of the driveway. We miss him, but I think that God has now given someone else palanca to look at every morning! God is with us all the time, giving us “grace moments”! We only need to be present to them. And the way to be present is through piety—to Practice being in the presence of God. To be open and eager and able to let down the walls that shut God out.

My journey has brought me to a good place. Do I still suffer from depression? Do I still find myself sometimes in the desert place? Do I still question my beliefs? Do I still rail at God in anger? Do I still say from time to time, “I love Church; it’s the people I can’t stand!”? YES, to all of the above. A journey has mountain tops and low places.

I pray daily, sometimes using aids like FORWARD DAY BY DAY or one of the many books of prayer we own. I use mantras, such as the Jesus prayer or “Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom” for meditation. I sing and/or listen to Christian music. But mostly I continue throughout the day, an on going conversation with God—asking questions and amazingly many times getting answers! And STILL, MANY times end my prayers with, “God I believe, but help me in my unbelief.”

I also have been meeting with a small group of people every week for the last ten years, where we talk about our piety, our relationship with Christ, and share our moment closest to Christ that week. It helps to keep us on track and to encourage each other to persevere on our faith journeys.

Frank Crumbaugh, our rector in Beach Haven, urged us one Sunday “to keep listening; to ask ‘What now or what next Lord!’” What an awesome responsibility! To ask ourselves “what word from my mouth was I born and baptized for?” Frank called it “Gospel Medicine”—to report to the world the Good News of

Jesus Christ!

Our life in Christ is a covenant of love. God WANTS to be In relationship with us! Piety is living a life of grace in a conscious, growing and shared manner. The practice of piety is an intentional process of spending time with God.

I heard a wonderful quote from a Rabbi once:

“In the next life the angels will not ask me, ‘Why were you not Moses?’ They will ask me, ‘Why were you not Susan?’”

Living in relationship with God allows us to be FULLY US. It is a relationship that continues to bring me security and great joy! I continue to ask God to open my eyes, my ears, my heart and my mind to Him.

## **New Ark #32**

“Love one another.

Just as I have loved you.”

On the Fifth Sunday of Easter I found myself in Church at Holy Innocents in Beach Haven, NJ. For those of you who know Susan and me, Holy Innocents is our Home Church away from Home.

I had little expectation upon entering Church that I would find, hear or be found by the theme for NewArk #32, but then came The Gospel: John 13:31 – 35, followed by a Sermon by the Rector, Frank Crumbaugh. In particular the last three sentences of the Gospel Reading caught my attention and called to me:

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

How utterly simple! How beautiful! How tremendously hard! These are some of the last thoughts shared by Jesus with his Disciples before being taken to die on a Cross.

In his Sermon Fr. Crumbaugh spoke about our needs as Christians to love one another in our diversity, unconditionally and in spite of our selves. He noted that there has to be room in our Church for everyone and the need to expand to see just how really big, in its love, our Church is being called to be. He also noted that if we can park our collective egos at the door we will be able to change the lives of unknown numbers of people.

I found myself caught up in these thoughts for the balance of the day and they have continued to echo within me as I considered the process of calling the Team for NewArk #32

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