

Finding Your Niche in the Winter Cold

The frigid weather in January made me wonder why I live in Wisconsin. Being stuck in the house more than I'd like, I decided to go to Hawaii. I worked a 1000 piece puzzle of a Hawaiian scene along a beautiful beach, with flowers, palm trees and more. Oh, yes, take me away to that place, Lord! I envision myself there, lying on the beach, soaking up the sun and watching the ocean, the surfers, the Hula dancers, and sipping Mai Tais. Ahhh! What could be more beautiful than Hawaii?

Wait a minute.... what could be more beautiful than Hawaii? I'm sure heaven is more beautiful! We've heard or read stories of people with near death experiences. They say nothing is more beautiful than heaven. Not only is it more beautiful, it isn't just a thought in our minds, or a week's vacation away; it is a *permanent* reality whose beauty awaits all of us.

So as the winter doldrums still remain, call upon our Lord to give us a glimpse of heaven on earth each day of our lives. It's here for us, we just have to open our eyes. We don't have to go to Hawaii for beauty. It surrounds us here, and awaits us in heaven.

Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything beautiful, for beauty is God's handwriting.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

New Year's Prayer

(By Silas House-Logger's Shopper Jan 2026)

Find a body of water, and be still beside it for a time. Build a fire and watch the flames. Sit on the porch. Lie on the grass. Light candles. Take a deep breath. Write a letter to someone. Discover something new every day. Learn. Tell stories. Listen to old people. Ask them questions. Give to others when you can and treat yourself occasionally. Read real books and newspapers. Always buy the grocery store flowers if they catch your eye. Remember there is power in moderation. Learn to cook or bake a new dish. Enjoy every meal. Savor your food. Drink water. Any chance you get, hold a baby. When the opportunity arises, dance. Always swim or wade in the water. Study leaves. Be completely quiet. Turn your favorite song up loud. Sing along. If someone makes you feel bad all the time, get away from them. Laugh with others. Laugh while you're alone. Spend time with animals. Don't judge. Think this: "There but for the grace of God go I," or "Everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." Forgive others. Forgive yourself.

"A dead thing can go with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it." —G.K. Chesterton

The Hunt

This year's hunting season was interesting. One of our sons shot and downed a big buck just before dark. He walked over to it, pulled out his knife and guess what? The buck jumped up and ran off. Four hours of tracking a blood trail in the dark, with flashlights, but the crew finally found the buck.

How many of us are hunting as fervently for God in our lives as hunters do in the woods? We often believe that our one hour of Mass is satisfactory. But our hunt for God should go beyond obligation. It takes putting our heart and soul into knowing Him and loving Him more than anything else. Yes, above all things, as the Act of Love indicates (that includes over and above hunting).

With Lent upon us, it's a good time to hunt for ways to grow spiritually. Keep shining your light on the path that leads to salvation, where the payoff is worth the hunt for God.

Train Like an Olympian

I would guess a number of us have been watching the Olympics. I marvel over the talent of these athletes! We watched a lot of the sports this year and we look forward to Matt Thums' curling team next week! The concentration and precision of the Olympians in their sports is a result of self-discipline. Although intense training is needed daily for these events, I'd guess there were days the participants felt they'd rather sleep in than get up and train. They know what "slacking off" means for them, their team and USA.

Let this Lent be *our* time of self-discipline—a time to train our minds and hearts to focus on leading a healthier life in both body and spirit.

Ask: "Do I need to set a specific time for both exercise and for quiet prayer? Do I need to add healthier food into my diet and more Scripture into my routine? Do I need to remove unnecessary clutter from my life and home, and be more charitable? Do I need to prepare better for the sacrifice of the Holy Mass? Both physical and spiritual wellness require constant training too. So if we need more self-discipline to do this, Lent is a perfect time to begin to train to win the Gold!

Learning From Our Dreams

We don't always remember our dreams. But once in a while one comes along that we can't shake from our mind. When this happens, I usually question what it means for me.

Recently I dreamed I took a challenged man to a big carnival. I don't know who he was, but it seemed I had super strength, because I was carrying him around with one arm, like a ventriloquist would carry his dummy. I was not weighted down in any way by carrying him. Watching this man's excitement to be there and to meet people, made for contagious joy for everyone else. I, myself, experienced so much joy in witnessing his happiness, that I physically felt my heart swell with love in the dream.

I recognize what great joy comes to all of us when we work to bring joy to others, especially those that need a boost or are challenged in some way. When we help carry the weight of another in need, it not only provides comfort and joy for them, but it makes our own hearts grow in love.

Likewise, our Blessed Mother Mary did this: Going to help Elizabeth, expecting Jesus to make more wine at a wedding, and being there for her Son throughout life, especially as He suffered and hung upon the cross. Her prayers must have been constant. They still are, as she continues to pray for all of us! But the greatest example of love is that of Christ. His heart swelled with compassion for us sinners, so much so that when it was pierced, his life-giving blood gushed forth, covering all sins upon the entire earth.

What love awaits our response today? Just look and see what opportunities surround us. I, myself, pray, "Lord, teach me how to make my dream become a reality for those in my life today."

What Do I Have To Offer?

The multiplication of the loaves and fishes (Mk 6:34-43). Note that being fed spiritually by Jesus for three days muffled the growling of their physical hunger. Spiritual hunger was more valuable to them, yet Jesus knew they needed both to survive. So He multiplied the little food the people had to offer, making it enough for all. God does the same today. He takes whatever we have to offer Him, no matter how little or how abundant the amount...and He multiplies it in many ways. Don't underestimate the power of God when we offer what we have. And, don't forget your Rice Bowls and envelopes this Lent. Our offerings will be used to feed all who hunger in the world in more ways than one!

Walking WITH Someone

Ice is never safe to walk on and we certainly had some challenging spells of it this winter. I have been extremely careful walking outdoors since my daughter fell on ice two weeks before Christmas. With a fractured leg and two ankle fractures, it still makes for some challenging times for her.

My daughter was usually a mile ahead of me when we'd go shopping or anywhere together. But she recently told me, "Falling like this has taught me to slow down."

We learn through life's hard knocks. Whether it is in driving, working with machinery, through acts of dishonesty, anger, selfishness and more, the hard knocks usually become teaching tools for us.

So today my husband and I went shopping. He gets out of the vehicle and he's off like a race horse. I catch up to him in the store. After we checked out, he's almost to the car with the cart while I'm first leaving the store after paying. Hmmm. Like father—like daughter! Oh, but in reality it's more like father **and** mother—like daughter! I questioned my own actions and remember times I hurried the children along to get something else done; I watched the clock sometimes shortening visits with friends and parents, thinking of what I had to do next. So many missed opportunities because of *my* hurrying!

I think we all need to ask, "Am I taking the time to walk *with* someone or talk *with* someone, without thinking about *getting other things done*?" I remember walking with my mother when I took her places, opening the door for her and helping her find a place to sit. I remember that it took extra time, but well worth it! How I wish I could do that for her once again! Those were special times for me. Sometimes we don't know what we've got 'til it's gone.

Try to walk **with** someone you meet this week, not in front of them. Perhaps we can all discover how to keep each other from falling, not just on the ice, but in helping build each other up in a spiritual sense too.

Dog-like Priorities

What dog doesn't like to go for a W _ _ _ ? (Be careful if you say that word around them!) When our son's dog is at our house, he refuses to go for a walk if there is an opportunity to get even a morsel of food when I'm cooking in the kitchen or eating. I don't even think he blinks for fear he'll miss a crumb that may fall to the floor. Oh, the priorities of a dog!

Little does Roonie know that the possibility of a tasty morsel caused him to pass up a walk and the opportunity to smell and entice any rabbits or squirrels along the way.

Roonie doesn't understand what he lost out on because of one bite. Look what that one bite did for Adam and Eve and for us today? May we all assess our lives this Lent by asking: What are the weaknesses and fleeting pleasures that tempt me? What long-range blessings do I miss out on when I choose something with a moment's pleasure? Maybe for today I'll skip that cookie and go for a walk myself!

7 things to say to God every morning:

Ps 118:24 *This is the day the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it.* **Thank You for another day.**

Proverbs 3:5 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your own intelligence rely not.* **I trust You with everything.**

Isaiah 58:11 *Then the Lord will guide you always and give you plenty even on the parched land...* **God, lead me today.**

Ps 51:12 *A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me.* **Forgive me and renew me.**

Isaiah 26:3 *A nation of firm purpose you keep in peace; in peace, for its trust in you.* **Fill me with Your peace.**

Matt. 5:16 *In the same way, your light must shine before me so that they may see goodness in your acts and give praise to your heavenly Father.* **Use me to bless someone.**

Ps 145:18 *The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth.* **Stay close to me today, God.**

Love Those Woolies

I'm tickled pink. This year the kids got me wool socks for Christmas! When my feet are cold, it's like I'm cold all over. But this...oh, my! Looking for a gift for your parents or for adult kids—here you go! We thank God for the many, MANY blessings like health, family, friends, and more, but do we thank Him for trivial things...like wool socks? There are so many blessings that we often take for granted. Today, I thank you, God, for my warm woolies! Now if you will teach me to be just as thankful for the thorns that come my way too!

Washing the Wounds of Jesus

We have a beautiful crucifix in the Sanctuary of our church, like no other I've seen. I remember when it had to be taken down during the ceiling renovations. The crucifix was laid on a bed in the spare room of the rectory at that time. I knew it was in need of dusting off.

While I wiped the image of Christ, I somehow experienced what it would have been like to actually be with Christ, watching Him suffer and die firsthand...of washing the blood from his lifeless body. I experienced a share of the pain our Blessed Mother must have had to endure as she held his lifeless body. I experienced some of what Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus must have encountered as they prepared Jesus' body for burial. As I gently wiped the face of Jesus and his extremities with my dusting cloth, I thought about how anyone could endure such torture, being bludgeoned and crucified for my sins. He took the rap for my transgressions! I could feel the pain of his Passion in the depth of my heart. One can't help but question, "What wondrous love is this?" To have such great love for someone despite the lack of love that is reciprocated through our doubts, fears, anger, jealousy, betrayal, unfaithfulness, sloth, and *every* sin under the sun.

What wondrous love IS this? It's a love beyond any of our understanding. This same love is present for all of us at every Mass. This is where Christ continues to offer his love—his Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity for us. Let us never doubt this love, but embrace it. Let us not walk away from Jesus today, like so many did when He was crucified. Make his death purposeful as we accept His mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and His love that continues to pour forth from the altar.

**Acts 3:19. Been to confession lately?
Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today!**