

Because We're Here

The children in Charles Schutz's cartoons have an innocent and gentle way of holding up a mirror and showing us the importance of how we deal with life.

Lucy is me on a bad day—bossy, judgmental, somewhat manipulative, cranky, and almost impossible to please. She sounds a lot like the voice of the media, proclaiming doom and disaster. No matter what is happening, the game will be lost and things will end badly.

Charlie Brown, on the other hand, never gives up believing. Despite the many times he's struck out, he's sure that one day he will get the game-winning hit. His devotion to the Great Pumpkin who has never shown up is unflagging. He continues to hold out hope that the next time Lucy will hold the football and not pull it away at the last minute. In the face of the negative, he somehow seeks the good.

Enter Linus, the thumb-sucking, blanket-toting preschooler who has the gift of showing us how to bring good into the midst of the mess. In a classic comic strip Lucy is lamenting the state of the world: "Things are so much worse than they were five years ago," she said. "Just look at things—crime, disaster—it's terrible." "That's not true," Linus replies. "How can you say that?" Lucy retorts. "Because I wasn't here five years ago," Linus answers quietly.

Linus believes his being here makes a difference—that the world is better because he is here. And I think Jesus would agree.

When Jesus took on our flesh and chose to be with us in the every-dayness of our lives, he showed us how important it is that we are here—that one person's life makes a difference. Look at the impact that his life had and continues to have centuries later.

Now before you say that we can't be expected to act like Jesus did, remember that he took on our humanity with all its fears, frustrations, and frailties. If we allow ourselves to enter in the scene of Jesus being led by the spirit into the desert and being tempted by the devil that's read on the first Sunday in Lent, we can feel the tension and the struggle with saying "No" to the lure of material things, power, and prestige. It isn't easy for us and it wasn't easy for Jesus either. But he did it and his doing so made a difference.

The following Sunday's reading talks of Jesus going with Peter, James, and John up to a mountain to pray and his divinity is evident. Peter says it's good that "we are here" When the glory is present it's always easier, but wasn't it also good to be "here" the previous week when Jesus wrestled with temptation?

Lucy would put out a shingle and up her "doctor's" fees and invite you to schedule a session if you even considered the idea. Charlie Brown would ponder and weigh the notion and hope it would be okay. But Linus would quickly respond that both places are good. We are not alone. Jesus promised to be with us in the midst of the mess and glory is the other side of struggle.

So forget what the news is saying, don't give up hope. The world is becoming a better place because you are here, because I am here—and Jesus is always with us.

—Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate

