

# Grace In The Small Things

Wasn't it just yesterday that I had to remind myself to write 2015 on my checks? It feels that way but a whole year has passed. There have been deaths to mourn, young lives to delight in, changes and letting go, challenges and unexpected graces, times of peace in the midst of turmoil. It's been an ordinary, extraordinary year. I've been blessed.

One of the graces of aging is recognizing and experiencing joy in the small things. A quick look around my office reminds me of all I've been given. Photos of family both alive and with God enfold me in love. There's a framed picture of a lighthouse given to me by a neighborhood pastor who described St. Leo's as a "beacon of light in the neighborhood." A paraplegic friend gave me a painting of community with members of all races coming together in their gifts and brokenness. A Madonna formed by the outlines of the African continent reminds me of the privilege I have to work with our African parishioners and a tapestry of a communal meal brings to mind our Guatemalan community. Our social work interns worked at the desk across from mine. They're in graduate school now. Working with them and other student interns over the years has brought me great joy. High on the wall across from me is a wood plaque carved by a friend that says "Bidden or not bidden, God is present." That's been the constant in this place and in this year—God's in the midst of everything—the mess and the mountain tops.

There's been a lot of attention lately to "mindfulness," being present and fully tuning in to what is going on in the present moment. For someone whose mind works as rapidly as mine does, that's a tall order. "Be still and know that I am God (ps. 46) always has challenged me. I'm not at all very good at sitting still. But I have found

that creating a "sacred space" facilitates quieting my spirit and helps me get in touch with God. I'm blessed to have a complete room in my home in which to do that, but a smaller place or even just one item could do the job.



Items in my bedroom bring back memories of past times of grace and offer hope for the future. I've got the candle that my husband lit every night when he was alive to signal his tagging in with God and going over the events of the day. Nearby is a photo of him as a young boy and pictures of Peter Max paintings we saw on a trip to San Francisco. There's also a print of Chagall's "Red Rooster," a gift he gave me when we were courting and his own expressionistic painting of "Hope." I've got drawings my daughter did for me when she was a young girl, a calendar with photos of grandchildren on each page, and a framed long version of the Serenity Prayer. I have a small statue of the prodigal son and another one of a mother embracing her child. There's a painting of St. Angela, my patron saint, by the same artist who designed our prayer wall of saints and holy people. Over the bed is a poster of a forest trail with the words "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God." There's my wall of crosses

and collages of family photos. I see God's presence in all of this and it causes me to pause and be grateful.

Look around your home. Find things that draw you into God's presence. Even if it is only one thing it is a reminder of God's love. Claim it as sacred. If you look carefully you'll find God's fingerprints everywhere, see grace at work, and realize how truly blessed you are.

—Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate  
(photo also by Angela)