

SENSITIVITY AND GUMPTION



The photo with this article was taken at the baptism of my granddaughter. She is in the arms of her godfather who is from Vietnam. Her father who is from Mexico is standing next to me. The diversity of relationships represented at the baptism sparked the reality that we are part of the whole that is humanity.

Four generations were present for the baptism, including two women in their 80's who created successful businesses in mid-life and have made their lives together since raising their children. The godfather left his businesses long enough to participate in the baptism. His wife and business partner who is the godmother was minding the store.

Two years ago at a lodge nestled in a forest by a river, I baptized the brother of my granddaughter. That gathering was attended by people from across the cultural, social and economic spectrum. Just prior to the most recent baptism on the outskirts of a rural community, I was present at the graveside service for someone I had known.

Such events remind me that family consists of our brothers and sisters the world over and that our friends are where we find them. I was away just four days in May, yet there was plenty of time to connect with all concerned, and to collect my thoughts for the eulogy I would deliver upon my return to Oro Valley.

Celebrating new life and honoring those who die enhances my awareness. Birth and death are the Alpha and the Omega of the human experience. When we open our hearts, our minds and our souls to the realities of creation we are participating in the kingdom of God.

Time apart from the routine and the familiar provides perspective. So much of what Jesus is about has to do with being present. I respect the congregation I serve because they support ministries beyond our sanctuary that make us present in our community.

It is a welcome privilege to be part of a congregation that is fulfilled by being present for each other, and for those who have been caught up in other aspects of their lives; until they are ready to nurture their own faith.

As stewards of our faith we are participants in the creation of spiritually healthy relationships that round out the human experience.

Being present for ourselves and others comes in handy when we are facing losses and significant transitions. It takes sensitivity and gumption to be present for the occasions that remind us of our connections, mortality, commitments and responsibilities. Noticing and caring is worth the effort when we follow through.

This fall marks fifty years since I met the woman who is my wife. She had been a single parent before we married in 1993. When we realized the friendship between her daughter and the son we adopted, it made perfect sense to expand our family. From the time they first met, our son and daughter called one other brother and sister.

Parenting my daughter made her part of my family and the adoption of my son is in keeping with my understanding of the gospel. Being part of a family is about more than genealogy. I will have another reminder of that when I return to northern Michigan for the baptism of Aiden James. By the time you are reading this, our son will have made me a grandparent once again.

When human beings look within and see that there is more to our identity than our work and social activities, we begin to realize the significance of being present for others. As we embrace our identity that has more to do with being than doing, we are on our way to becoming the mature souls that God intends.