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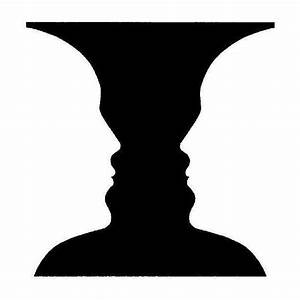
Have you ever done one of those optical illusion tests? You know, where you’re supposed to see either an old woman in a kerchief or a young, beautiful lady with a necklace. Or even the one where you ask, “Do you see the vase or the two faces looking at each other?” Yeah, and then once you see it, you can’t un-see it. Sometimes that’s okay, but sometimes it can be bad, like you can’t move beyond the not being able to un-see it. That’s how this week has been for me. Except that instead of being unable to un-see something, it’s that I am unable to un-hear something.

So you know one of my resolutions (and an ongoing quest for me) has been to work on my personal prayer life. I’m trying to do better at taking time to pray each day and to spend some quiet time with the Lord so I can hear him. I like to use the Word Among Us booklet (they’re free, in the back of church. Help yourself!) to help me pray. It includes all of the day’s Mass prayers and readings, plus it includes a meditation to jump start your reflection. Some of the recent readings and reflections have really spoken to me. Or should I say the Holy Spirit has spoken to my heart through these. The Sunday, January 12 reflection revealed that like Jesus who went out into the world, I, too, am commanded to do so. I am really feeling God push me to do this more. The Monday meditation pointed out how even Jesus’ own disciples could have been invited by Him multiple times before they finally put down their nets and followed Him. I could feel God calling me again to this ministry. If Jesus’ best friends needed to be encouraged time and time again, why would it be different for me? I probably need just as much if not more reassurance that this is what I’m supposed to be doing. Then on Tuesday we hear about Hannah and how she communicated “with God the way that most of us do, through prayer.” And the revelation to me was that it is through others that we most often can hear Him responding to us. I committed to taking some time right then to reflect on how I’ve heard God through others, as well as how maybe God has spoken through me. Another “hit home” for me from this reflection was that Hannah had been depressed. In fact, she claimed to live with “deep sorrow and misery.” But by giving it to God, asking her Creator for a reprieve from her despair, she “no longer appeared downcast.” And the lesson is to “take your worries to God in prayer, and be open to hearing him answer through someone else. A kind word, an attentive ear, or a gentle course correction- God uses all these and more to reach us. That’s why we can’t expect to hear God only in mystical experiences. We also need to listen carefully to the people around us.” (The Word Among Us, January 2020, pg. 35.) I MUST give my melancholy to the Lord. I need to learn to listen for Him to speak through others. And then on Wednesday, the meditation speaks of Eli’s mistaking both Hannah and Samuel’s situations and interpretations of what was happening. How many times have I done that myself, misunderstood or just didn’t hear His voice? But Eli did not give up, so neither shall I. I will continue to walk this path, this path with many detours and dead-ends, this path with help along the way…provided I listen for it. Now that I am listening better, I cannot un-hear His voice. And that’s a good thing.

Join us in Fellowship Hall each week after the last Sunday Mass for Faith Formation. There is so much richness in our faith. No one could ever know it all. Come grow with us!

Blessings,

 Julie Gould

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