

Between Here and There by Sister Diane Langford, CDP

I thought I would get this done before returning to Neosho, but, alas, between my various travels and other commitments, that didn't happen. It's great to be back in the Ozarks, however, and maybe I needed this "air" to reflect on the event I want to share with you.

In late October I went to my high school class 45th reunion! I know, most classes have a 50th year reunion, but one of our classmates with whom I have established a friendship in the last few years, is going blind and has some other health issues. She is concerned that by our 50th year more of us will have died—or will be unable to do the trip back to Tulsa. So, believe it or not, she "rallied" the class and over half of us showed up!

I had never been to a class reunion as they were always in the summer and it's just harder for me to get to summer events. So, though I was enthusiastic about the idea, actually going to the reunion was somewhat disconcerting. You know the questions: will anyone care to know me now? will I pass "inspection"? will I know anybody who is there? what *will* we talk about for three or four hours?

In addition to the usual buffet dinner and conversation with a DJ playing "our" music in the background, we had planned for a Mass on Sunday morning at our high school chapel. I was (of course!) in charge of that. Though we had a great time on Saturday night—lots of catching up—and all of it friendly!—I wondered if anyone would show up for Sunday morning. Maybe I was the only Catholic left! After all, we came into adulthood in a "God is dead—throw out the Latin" world where most of us knew more ex-priests and ex-nuns than ones who had stayed in religious life and service. But, amazingly almost everybody came for the Mass—and they acted like they're still some kind of Catholic!

The classmate whom I asked to read the Prayers of the Faithful even choked up when he prayed for peace in the world and I know he was thinking about a classmate from our home parish who was killed in Viet-Nam.

The priest-celebrant was a young (younger than us!) man who is the President of Bishop Kelley High School, our alma mater. He was personable and present. It seemed to us that he was enjoying being with us—and he stayed through the brunch that followed. We were impressed!

The individual who spurred us on and planned the event, as I said earlier, is going blind. The gospel reading for that Sunday was the story of the blind man who begged Jesus for his sight. You know me: I just couldn't let that get past us! And so, after Communion I asked Father for an opportunity to speak to everyone. I risked the ruination of a budding friendship by calling Connie forward and another friend-classmate helped her into the aisle and down toward the altar. I invited everyone to join with Father in blessing our classmate and leading us in prayer for her health. She is no longer a practicing Catholic and I thought she might react a little violently to this spiritual intrusion on her life. But—she was quite moved—especially when fellow alums came out of pews and surrounded her with love and prayer.

I've come to see that “between here and there” we all take unique paths. And God is right there with **everyone** on **every** road. We might long for all of us “to be on the same road” and it's especially hard when people we love or are related to choose a path different from the one we find consoling. But, I've decided that sometimes the best we can do is “wave” when we see them along the way, call out our love in every way possible, and be there for them if they seem to lose their way

As we “wait in joyful hope” during this Season of Advent, we will be involved in lots of events with people who are on those different paths: the Food Basket Brigade, Christmas parties, and family get-togethers. Remaining in “joyful hope” will allow us to recognize that each event “between here and there” is another opportunity to reflect God's goodness and our gratitude.