

Nature Strikes Again


☒ Wasn't it just a few years ago that I reported on a "microburst" which swept the village hall to shambles?! Last night around 11:00, another landmark was struck. This area has been in almost desperate need of rain. Our prayers were answered as lightning and thunder rolled throughout town. While watching the Yankees handle the Blue Jays, a large booming "pop" was heard, felt, and seen. No one knew where it originated from but undoubtedly, it was from one of those streaks of lightning that lit up the night sky. Between 10:30 and 11:00, police cars, fire engines, and ambulances lined the street in front of the house so of course, I began to wander outside to investigate. I did not get far before I came face to face with the unmistakable smell of smoke. I could not see anything so I came back home and called my sister who lives right across from the United Methodist Church (my house stands 5 buildings to the north of the church). "Yes, the church is on fire!" This would explain the pop that went off about a half-hour earlier!

At approximately 11:45, I saw the smoke and flame from outside our dining room window. Initially, heavy smoke was reported coming out of the steeple and higher parts of the building. Eventually, flames erupted and the roof caved in, injuring one of the dozens of firefighters from 15 surrounding communities. The firefighter was transported to an area hospital with non life-threatening battle scars. I went across the street to the empty school lot to investigate along with dozens of others some of whom were out of towners who had gotten off 2nd shift jobs. Thankfully, the blaze was contained and did not spread. However, the battle was fought well into the night/early morning.

This morning, the damage could really be seen. Holes in the roof. Stained glass windows on the north and south sides of

the building blown out. Remarkably, the bell tower was still hanging on and the windows on the east side of the church were still intact.

I personally have had a relationship with the church over the years. Each summer, my brothers and sister attended Vacation Bible School. The church has sponsored our village's Cub Scout pack for a number of years. Each year, the pack participated in a service by providing alter boys, readers, and other functions. Over the last several years, the church has held Wednesday Night meals and provided a food pantry for the needy in the area.

Another landmark that has stood over 75 years brought down by nature's fury. May God be with the rescue teams who responded so bravely, the one who was injured, and most importantly, the congregation of Edgerton United Methodist Church as they will rally together and continue to follow the Lord. 



Au Unbelievably Blessed Weekend And Some Exercise

This weekend saw the penultimate weekend for our awesome priest as well as my brother performing 21 baptisms. I was exceedingly blessed and humbled to be a part of them. Father Art regaled the congregation once again with a tale of his days on board his naval ship during the Cold War in the 1970s.

On board ship, there were a number of musicians who frequently played on the flight deck. In international

waters, the admiral encouraged them to go aft and serenade the Russian vessel which was just behind them. The American vessel started off with "Anchor's Aweigh" which the Russian's answered with an appropriate tune from their country. The tunes would continue to volley with selections like "The Marine's Hymn" (because NO ONE could beat the USA Marine corps), "When the Saints Go Marchin' In" (played by the Russians), and finally "Sweet Georgia Brown." After hearing SGB, the Russians turned around and headed back into their own space... WHY? The song is widely known as the theme for the world-famous Harlem Globetrotters, the wizards of the hardwood.

Finally, the lesson of Amos the sheep herder and fig gatherer who claimed that he was not "a prophet nor the son of a prophet" (7:14) was elaborated on. Yet, everyone is called to proclaim the peace regardless of their profession. This led to a serenade of "Let There Be Peace on Earth" begun by solo sax and later joined by male tenor voice. SO glad I was called to fill in for a song leader who had other plans for Saturday night.

This morning was equally blessed and awesome. A few weeks ago, I was asked by my brother if I had ever thought about being baptized as an adult. Honestly, I was not sure if I could given my Catholic faith of which I have not been asked to leave nor ever would. But after prayer, much thought, and knowing that Chris would NEVER do anything that would jeopardize my faith, I was very honored to be one of the first people he has baptized. Minutes after the ceremony, I found myself feeling even more blessed and strong. I was also honored to witness Llama, Goose, and 18 others also affirm their faith!

Watching Chris deliver his message, I am sure everyone could see how excited and moved he was by becoming speechless with tears of joy forming in his eyes. I adored his lesson on the "topsy-turvy/upside-down" practices of Satan. Peter stating

to Christ hours before the crucifixion that the apostles would fight for him. Jesus actually calls him a Satan and a hypocrite. Judas, himself, being paid 30 pieces of silver to betray his teacher. Both of these point to doing what is "right" for the individual and not what is "right" for HIM.

On a tangent of my own.... Last night seconds before mass was to begin, the organist and I discovered that the sound system was not turned on. Being clear in the back of the church in the choir loft, I had to quickly travel to the front where the switch is and turn the mikes on and quickly return to the loft. Where were my red cape and tights when I needed them ☐

Thanks be to GOD for bringing Father Art and Chris to lead and to prepare those who want to follow and be closer to HIM on their next step to a life of faith. Love to you both.

On The TV Box Again

There are a lot of forms of success. Yesterday was full of fun although the end may not have been as successful as some might think to me it was a very fun time! My aunt took me to breakfast for my birthday before I had to go to work. After work and grabbing a bite to eat, I headed out armed with the GPS to the city for the Millionaire casting call. I arrived at my hotel in good time (enough to watch a rather depressing All Star Game). I did manage to get a few hours of sleep before I woke at 4AM. I arrived at the Hilton about 5AM and was given instructions on where the other auditioners were assembling (the doors did not open until 6). I was pleasantly surprised in seeing only 25-30 people in front of me. I was not sure if there would be people with tents and sleeping bags

or not. I also noticed the local tv crew on the scene. I texted the house to have someone start taping... just in case. However, for whatever reason, my sister (who drops her daughters at the house before she goes to work at 6) failed to receive the message. Figures since the gentleman right in front of me was interviewed. I will have to keep checking the [site](#) to see if the segment pops up.

By 6AM, there was a good number of people in line. The camera travelled the length of the line along with staff from Millionaire who encouraged us to show some enthusiasm. Of course, that was not difficult for me. Some of the people behind me were a bit camera shy wishing for a paper bag to put over their head. Honestly, what would happen if one of them were selected to be on the show if they could not be on film for a passing camera?

At about 6:15, the first 300 were corralled into a waiting room where t-shirts were thrown out. Then came the big moment. We were shown to the the testing site where we were given a 10 minute 30 question multiple choice test. I thought I was back in grade school with a bubble test with a number 2 pencil. This made it extremely easy to learn who passed since the cards with our responses were fed into an electronic reader. Although I thought that I had done well, my number was not one of the many of my group who were announced. However, there were a few from my table who did. Plus, a friend from the theater who was in a later group successfully completed the test and was to return for an interview at noon. Good luck, Squirmy!

On my way home, I stopped into Wal-Mart where one of my former co-workers said that she had seen me on the news. After grabbing some breakfast at McD's, I came home and crashed. So although I will not be advancing to NYC and being asked "Is That Your Final Answer?", the experience was priceless. Plus, the newscast at noon reported that the response was so positive that there may be another cattle call in the future.

Who Wants To?

✘ I think I must have been in the right place Friday afternoon. On my lunch hour, I was watching *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. During the last commercial break, an ad promoting auditions in my neck of the woods came across. I thought to myself... well maybe I will go. After prayer and consideration, I made the decision that **YES I WILL GO!** I remember back about 13 years ago after the premiere episode hosted by Regis, I dialed the then "900" number to play the fastest finger round and tried to make the cut. A few years later after trying each time the opportunity arose (eventually, the number became toll-free), I successfully completed round one and waited for a follow up call the next day. Alas, I was unsuccessful in round two.

This Wednesday beginning at 7AM, I will be attending one of the show's Summer Tour audition calls. Instead of once again getting up at 4AM, I decided to make a reservation and stay the night. Five years ago, I had one of the best experiences in the city when my best friends, our chauffeur, and I made our way to the television studio to promote one of our community theater's productions. I think this experience will be very fun. And I am not thinking about anything but this initial step.

So at this point, I just pray that I am safe in my journey and have as much fun with the experience as possible!

I Wonder If Henry Started Like This

Well... I have officially been a bank teller for three weeks. I spent two at the main branch of the small community financial establishment watching videos (I honestly thought I was back at Wally World), learning the basics, and finally waiting on customers. The customer interaction comes as no problem (after @) + years it should not be a problem). It's that part after that is still a bit scary. I mean to make sure you are doing everything correctly... not giving back too much or too little and above all... READING THE COMPUTER SCREEN informing me what to do. Sometimes my mind has been going at warp speed and makes my hands go faster than my eyes see what is in front of me. Of course, it may still be the newness of the job and learning so much. Not to worry, I'm sure it will become second nature in time.

On Monday, I began at my local branch which conveniently is right out my front door across the street beside the empty lot where stood the old elementary school. I think the familiar atmosphere where "everybody knows my name" will help. Of course, there are those customers who will come in and make sure that they test you just because they know you. My former boss did just that twice last week. She came in with bags full of deposits, change orders, and harassment. After I completed the transactions, I gave back as much as I had received to the delight of my female co-workers. But it has been fun to wait on customers who are accustomed to seeing me at the grocery store. A gentleman actually ordered a gallon of milk and loaf of bread.

By Friday after working three weeks Monday-Saturday, I am definitely ready to settle into my new schedule (off Saturday at 1PM until Tuesday at 11AM and off no later than 6 at night). Back to back days off? Evenings off?

Some neat coincidences. I had already known that the HR director was someone I have been acquainted with for a number of years. I did NOT realize that the girl who called me in for my second interview was a classmate of mine from high school. I also got to work with one of my fellow *Wonderful Life* cast mates during my first two weeks.

So... fun at times but at times a bit scary. But something ALMOST totally new!

Yesterday

It really does seem like yesterday that I was on stage in what is now my third favorite role ever. A few fantastic parts over the last 6 years or so have pushed it back a few places. I'm not one to play favorites but let's be honest... some roles just hold more meaning behind them. It was either May 29-30, 1992 or May 22-23, 1992 (I'm sitting here looking at my mobile calendar) I'll have to look at my old Log of E to find out the correct weekend but right now I have a bat roaming the premises and an Aunt visiting from California who just arrived and decided to run and hide while she could ☐

Annie will always hold a large piece of my heart. It was the last time I performed on the stage of the old high school auditorium. It was the final time (and only time) Ma 2 directed a musical I was cast in. It was the best cast of the three theatrical productions I was involved in at EHS. It was this cast and crew that first gave me the impression that a group of performers could be so much more than a group who performed two shows (I still could have done so many more) and went their separate ways. It created that sense of family that only the best experiences can create and the first which

I was actually sad to see end. Several of my friends were cast as well as my sister and two of my cousins and the experience only tightened that bond. And Daniel Francis Hannigan/Rooster Hannigan/Danny the Dip was the first character that made me realize that I am a serious character actor (seems like a contradiction in terms "a serious character actor"?)

I know that I have related the audition process previously. How I "nailed" the role of Daddy Warbucks but "could do so much more as Rooster." I just knew that I had to recreate that role somewhere down the line somehow. Even when I was not cast in the role in FCF's production a few years ago, I was not THAT upset because it would not have had the same meaning as it did the first time. Although I did hear several audience members (many complete strangers) comment that the part was horribly miscast.

The wrap party was hilarious for many reasons. Remember "Coke II"... previously marketed as NEW Coke? Yes, this was my first and last experience with the beverage. I don't remember being as emotional after the wrap party as I was following opening night. Maybe it was sitting through the sluggish *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* that caused the tears to flow. "Ah, YES, I remember it well."

ANNND coming this Fall... the 35th Anniversary Broadway Production. All of the orphans and Miss Hannigan have been cast. Alas... I am not a dancer which was something that came up this evening at work. There was a "Vault" photo in the Earth tonight of Aggie, Warbucks, Grace Ferrell, Annie, President Roosevelt, Lily, and myself which I attempted to scan but to no avail.

What a fun trip down memory lane!

Happy 100th Birthday

This year marks two centennial anniversaries. Of course, the most famous being the launch and sinking of the SS ~~Minnow~~ (err,,) *RMS Titanic*. Today, our village celebrated the anniversary of the dedication of Clem, the Civil War Monument that first stood at the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Indiana Street until it was moved to its present location on July 22nd, 1972 (just under a year before the author of this post made his own appearance in the world). Clem's dedication date was May 30th, 1912 but what a lovely (if a little warm) day to honor him.

My preparation for the day began shortly after my recital. I had been asked if I would be interested in performing a few songs for the day around the time of "Songs I Have Learned" but really had hard little aside from the inquiry. The songs I had to choose from was vast. I figured two from the Civil War era would be appropriate or anything patriotic. I decided on first, "Aura Lee" a little ballad written during the period which lent its melody to a very popular song made famous by a past artist which was the title of his first movie. ANYONE?! (no cheatin). With some help, I also decided on "Just Before the Battle, Mother" another lovely tune that was popular (with different lyrics) on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line.

I was going to perform the pieces accompanied by my guitar-playing coach. Unfortunately, she forgot that she had a prior commitment today. I eventually decided that I would sing them *a capella* unless a suitable accompaniment track could be found. Fortunately, yesterday I was informed that another performer for the event had a copy of "Aura Lee." Because I was really unfamiliar with my second selection, I decided to sing "America the Beautiful." A good thing I did, because the

other singer was singing "Just Before the Battle..."

This morning, I made my way to the bandstand where the accompaniment tracks were waiting. I could have sung them either way but the tracks were both easy to perform to even if they were in a lower key.

So, after the Right Honorable Mayor /Friendly Friar made his opening remarks and the high school band played a few pieces, I was invited to take the stand and performed my "five pieces." It could have been five; however, the other singer stole at least three of the pieces I had considered ("Oh, Shenandoah," "Battle Hymn of the Republic," as well as the aforementioned piece). I was congratulated on my performance by several members of the crowd who braved the temperatures.

At least there were not trains that passed by as happened a few years ago when my cousin and I performed during our summer festival.

All in all, a fun little ceremony and a very fitting tribute to Clem and all the service men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Hopefully, we all made a special effort to remember them today but also everyday.

A Different Super Power Movie

If you have had your fill of *The Avengers* and are looking to fill the gap before *The Amazing Spider-Man* opens followed by the final film in the Christopher Nolan Batman trilogy, there is a very intriguing, very different take on the genre.

Chronicle tells the story of three high school lads who discover a crater which they follow underground in which they discover a glowing object and pass out. After inexplicably returning above ground, each of the teens discover that they have the power of telekinesis (the ability to move objects with their minds).

One of the interesting things about *Chronicle* is that it is shot in “lost footage” style. Andrew (the central character of the piece) has a penchant for filming everything from school to his family life. What starts out as creating with Legos with no hands soon develops into increasingly dangerous pranks until a big battle in the skies of Seattle ensues.

For me, the most fascinating theme of the movie is the question of what having “Great Power” means to three young men. It is fun to see Andrew (the outcast), Matt (the “normal, everyday” teenager), and Steve (the Big Man on Campus) experiment with their newly acquired skill; however, it delves into the darker side. If Uncle Ben had not given his sage advice hours before his death, would Peter Parker have become a hero? Would Clark Kent have battled for “Truth, Justice, and all that other stuff” if he had not been raised by his morally upstanding Earthly parents? The timely nature vs. nurture scenario.

A fun little film that I was not aware of three months ago when it hit movie theaters. There are no big name stars but still a different take on two (at the moment) popular genres.

Diamonds and Roses

Last night was Kathrines’s 6th Annual Recital (it was my second). I began the day going for one last run-through (for

both of us as she accompanied me). Following my triumphant gig a little more than a month ago, I was challenged to get out of my Musical Theatre box and try something a little more artsy. "The Little Irish Girl" was a fun piece which not only allowed me the opportunity to attempt an Irish brogue but also a chance to portray the gentleman suitor and the titular figure of the piece along with the "pigs that number seven." Must have left them at the "cabin".

Following my rehearsal, I had time to come back home and relax for a few hours and bake the cookies I was taking (I think the Acus' will have more than a few cookies for a while). I was told that there was a great shortage for the reception 6 years ago. The young man who informed her of this had a plate containing 7 cookies! Good call that! So for each subsequent recital, more than enough parents or performers step up and provide.

Last year, the students were divided up into two separate shows to allow for the limited confines of the Little Theater. Carol and I were the final performance of the night and were sequestered in the green room so that M. And Mme. Thenardier could be revealed in magnificent fashion. Last night, I was the second student on stage following Davey Jones whom I thought had passed on a few months ago (but no, this was not the lead singer of the Monkees... I think I may have mentioned him in last year's wrap).

Because I selected the piece little more than a month ago, I was pleased with the result. Members of the audience must have thought so, too! After my performance, I sat with Tiff, Keith, and Trudles who all were complimentary. At intermission and at the reception, Mr. Ed (who delighted the audience with a glorious performance of "All Glory, Laud, and Honor" on the church's piano) remarked how amazed he was with my voice. Other audience members remembered "Master of the House." Glad I am so memorable!

I was happy that I got to sit in the audience for the rest of the evening. This gave me the chance to see the other students and ensembles from young to more seasoned. There was a mix of genres from Christian to Country to Elvis to Lance's "Orphan's Tears" (a rap) and a little Broadway. Kathrine's little guy, Drew, gave his first performance on voice and guitar which was really cool! Over the last several weeks, I have heard Rob practicing "Burnin' Love" with Kathrine backing him on percussion (he is wrapping up as I arrive for my weekly lesson). The only thing missing was the high pitched female (or is it Elvis in falsetto) "AH, AH, AH" towards the end. I forgot to ask why they were missing. I also heard one of my favorite pieces of any genre that I must track down... think I will save that for another time.

There were also door prizes. Inside two of the programs which I distributed, there was a rather huge drawing of a rose. Totally unmistakable. The two program holders each received a rose bush.

Not sure about the rest of the audience, but I thought the recital was lovely. Although sitting through 24 performances might otherwise seem dull, each student gave their best, entertained and flowed.

I saw someone standing up taking pictures throughout the evening so one or two may be coming.

A Little Princess

I cannot believe how fast the little (or not so little) nephews and nieces are! From Shelby who turned 17 in March to

the tiniest Kydall who is 6 months, it doesn't seem possible that one of them is driving. Shelby still has not gotten her permit but I know some adults who have never had a license. Last Sunday, 8 year old Alyssa made her First Communion. It has been a long haul this school year with all the prayers she has had to learn and devise the meaning of. Then came her First Penance (I still think I made my First Communion before going to confession for the first time). And finally, the "Big" day.

As in year's past, there was a special mass for the 14 communicants. For his homily, Father Art walked down the aisle and asked the children questions about their special day and the journey they had been on. He made an analogy to every person and an old toy (that he insists is worth millions... check your toy boxes) called [Mr. Machine](#). We are so much more than a mechanical robot programmed by a human creator... sounds like a lesson learned during more than a few hours of a certain sci-fi television series and at least the first movie (ZZZZ to that movie).

Following the distribution of communion, the second graders stood front and center and sang while they signed a song. Not the same song I learned years ago. Later in the day, the family tried to figure out how long the current second grade teacher has been at the Catholic school. Just a few years as she has led the classes of my 3 siblings and I (and this year marks my 20th High School Reunion).

After the ceremony, the family gathered at the banquet room of the local restaurant to eat and to celebrate Alyssa's special day,

On a sad note, Father Art will be leaving our church in July after only a year. I had heard that he is not in the best of health and the burden of leading a number of services each weekend between two churches along with his other duties has taken its toll. May God be with Father Art wherever He leads

him and his magical sax.

