

GLIMPSE

Defining Moments

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Perhaps one good Lenten activity would be to review the real "aha" moments of our lives. Some are insights such as figuring out for the first time what 'X' was and how to solve for it in Algebra. That was a biggy for me. There was the "aha" experience resulting from the over-consumption of large and ripe plums. There was the great "aha" when I found out that all people were not Irish, and not even Catholic! Of course the confusing "aha" that girls were not like boys in many ways. This insight continues to this day with even more clarity and confusions, but that's for another day.

"Ahas" are usually centered in ourselves. They result in affirmations, accumulations, and senses of abilities, power and personal giftedness. They are elements of how we grow up and deeper at the same time. They can be physical things such as learning to hold your breath while under water although it increases buoyancy so you cannot stay under very long unless you let the air out. There is the tasty discovery that eating chocolate at night allows you the distasteful experience of caffeine-induced counting of sheep. Yes, some "ahas" do result in "oh-ohs"; insights, self-discoveries, affirmations, awareness of gifts and talents are exciting and do tend to a self-centeredness. The "oh-ohs" come with the dawning awareness that we cannot keep things of ourselves to ourselves.

Once one finds out, through one "aha" one is a good singer or actor or even a good writer, one eventually feels the challenge of being moved to offer it which would also be accompanied by fears and doubts. "Oh-oh" or "oh-no" is the flip-side of the "aha". Love relationships in marriage, community, friendships depend on the grateful acceptance of the self first through many "ahas". One cannot give what one does not have. Yes, for sure, we receive ourselves through the "ahas" received through the encounters with others, but the work, the inside acceptance, moves us from awareness to donation and this is where the "oh-ohs" arise. We can give what we do have then. If we judge it as good the good will always want out. If you know a good joke, you just have to tell it ASAP. The gooder will always want the greater.

It seems that God works with us in this same way. Our Jewish forparents kept getting "ahas" through their being freed, fed, found and victorious often enough to become aware of the great "aha" that they were the People of God. The "oh-oh" was the following of God, trusting their relationship with God by keeping the spirit and invitations of the Law. They loved their name; they also loved their self-centeredness and strong will. Sound familiar?

Jesus caught fish for Peter and his brothers which was a great "aha" for them. The consequence was the invitation to leave and follow. Peter expresses his "oh-oh" by inviting Jesus to depart and allow Peter to go back where the big catches of fish are still to be made. "Ahas" have their consequences in God's relationship with us. Delights, understandings, consolations, affirmations are two-sided and so a bit dangerous. We tend to love the known, but fear the invitations to the unknown, the beyond, the next. Grace leads to grace. There are always more "ahas" up ahead and we can become more comfortable and accepting of the "oh-ohs" which can become more "ahas". It is only a glimpse, stay away from the "un-uhs"; they'll keep you under water too long.