

## GLIMPSE

### Centering

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I visited recently a family whose backyard was a snow-covered steep hill. A path had been molded so that a flat plastic sled could be sat in for a quite thrilling plunge for persons of any age and any degree of trust. I must say, some merely watched. The standers-by did provide a great cheering section for us elders, but especially for the three-year-old granddaughter.

The more the crowd of ten shiverers cheered this Icelandic descendent, the more she climbed back up the hill and jumped into her torpedo and shot down the incline breathing heavily through her increasing mask of snow. Discomfort, cold, runny nose seemed to be worth her being at the center of adult entertainment and amazement.

After my two trips into winter's embrace I had had enough of snow, cold feet and bottom and no personal affirmation of my bobsledding abilities was worth it. The little ice-princess couldn't wait for me to return her rocket for her next take-off. What was wonderful about it all was how deeply the elders enjoyed her performances. We all stood around a log fire at the top of the hill centering our attention, admiration and affection upon her and she loved that more than the snow-faced latherings she received at the same time.

I began to wonder when did I, or if I ever did, let go of wanting such attention, admiration and affection. I am still wondering and musing that it does take a long time, many years, if ever, to let go of sledding for our being at the center. As happy as the little ice-pilot was that afternoon, I had a twinge of knowing the pains she will go through, that we all go through, when finding out how much attention she will not get in her life. Now when we all went inside, she changed her activities, but all in hopes of her entertaining us, which she did. When adult conversation would interrupt she would find different ways of returning to the top of the hill again for more of enjoying being at the center. It was quite a delight for me, a kind of bachelor, to realize how much parental attention it takes to

please and love a child. What I came to realize as well was that there but for her age go I.

A friend of mine wrote recently that she felt as if her life were a test for which she had not studied. That's a good one. I would say that just sometimes I feel as if I am in a play for which I have not read or memorized my lines. I did have the female lead in a musical play written by a group of talented young Jesuits during a summer vacation many years ago. I was the star, singing my heart out in falsetto. I recall, at this great distance of time, how let down, or deflated I felt when the play was over. Nobody was cheering or asking me to sing a few lines. It was just back to vacation-schedule.

The difficult thing is to be at our own center enough that we do not have to be at somebody else's center whose affirmation is a temporary drug of choice. The years it takes to find our center are years of sledding and acting when there is no celebration. The truth is that the closer I am to my center, the closer I will be to the others and perhaps assisting them to be grateful rather than graspy. There is the term, "Centering Prayer" and it is a blessed time of being present to oneself being present to God. I think that all prayer centers us without much celebration or admiration. Each of us is at the center of God's creative love. I enjoy praying this way, and I know quite clearly when my prayer is over. It is the moment, the feeling, the being moved out of my prayer-chair to get on with my part in the play of grace.

God creates us to continue God's creation of life, love and to help God center that Love in the lives of others. Not one of us is at the center of the universe or world. Each of us is at the center of the Universal Love of God and when we get hold of that truth, at least now and then, we don't have to spend much time and effort sledding, singing, demanding attention or affection, because we already have it. It is only a glimpse, keep cheering for the little ones.