

GLIMPSE

Ebb and Flow

Fr. Larry Gillick, S.J.

Oceans are a tremendous rolling mystery. Standing on the shore one can imagine all the creatures swimming or resting in the salty vastness. Ships, treasures, caverns, mountains and all other kinds of unknowns are hidden under those waves which come licking at our feet.

With each lapping presentation the ocean coughs up something of its mystery: stones, sticks, rocks, pebbles, and the little unknowns. You might be attracted to one such offering, but then a persistent wave wipes the sand clean like a magic-board and you might want to be quicker next time. Anne Morrow Lindbergh in her book, *Gift from the Sea*, invites the beach-reacher, "One should lie empty, open, choiceless, as a beach, waiting for a gift from the sea." Not easy for us to be *choiceless* and *waiting*. We are grabbers, holders and selectors.

We have oceans within us and they wash up on the shores of our consciousness presenting various interior experiences for which we have no defenses or control. One huge breaker is grief. We can be walking along the shore of our day and woosh, we are knocked over or literally to our knees by a something. What triggers it can be a voice, a face, a note, a little old thing and then, like the watery eraser that is gone, but we are wetened by the splash it causes in there where waits some tears, or clenches or frowns. We can dry ourselves off with the rag of denial or the blanket of suppressing, but those tears and clinches do not disappear, they wait for another wave-time.

It does amaze me how quickly tears find their ways to my cheeks. We never know what the waves of time are going to throw up on our shores of awareness and the spiritual person of awareness walks reverently, and not cautiously available to the surprises. We might want to reach down and throw this stone of memory, this picture of loss way out, back into the seas of forgetfulness. Grief is a terrible gift. It hurts, but the gift still offers us the acceptance that we loved and were loved. We are forced to our knees with sadness, but not regret. We never know

when these will happen as we walk along between the edge of the unknowable ocean and the solid sands of the comfortable and controlled. We are choiceless as to the time, intensity and the thing which will break and wash. We do have a choice about how we will live with and beyond our grief. I would like to keep walking, receiving, reverencing and waiting for what is real to cleanse my soul from its pretenses.

It is only a glimpse and we cannot figure out the salty-ocean of God anyway.