

GLIMPSE

Amazing!

Fr. Larry Gillick, S.J.

We tend to be incredulous believers about most things. I counted twenty-four different statements a person can make upon hearing some fact or about some happening. "No way!" "No kidding?" "Incredible!" "Who said?" "For sure!" "Forget that!" You might count many others and catch people responding doubtfully, but hopefully at the same time.

Elephants in the wilds of the African jungle eat five hundred pounds of food a day. They have six sets of maturing teeth. Each set decays and is replaced. Eventually, most elephants die of starvation, because their last set of teeth fall out. What's your response to that?

In North America, a railroad train, when approaching a road-crossing, always toots two long blasts, a short one and then a third long toot. "No kidding?" Yup, and the reason is historical. In England, any train carrying the queen would blast that four-tone announcement that the queen was on the train. Two longs, a short followed by a long is, or was, the Morse code for the letter "q". "Nonsense!" "Really?"

In the city where I grew up a moderately wide river flowed through and then into one of the Great Lakes, Lake Michigan. The story goes that a fellow walking across the bridge of the main street decided, as a joke, to tell the first person he met that he had seen a whale in the river. A block later he told a group of people waiting for a bus the same story. They doubted him, but began wandering down toward the bridge just to take a look for themselves. Eventually he made his way to the city library on Eighth Street and was confronted by an on-rushing crowd. He grabbed one such and asked where he was heading. "To the bridge! There's a huge whale swimming around and trying to get under the bridge!"

Obviously the story's maker-upper, shouted, "You're pulling my leg!" He turned and ran back to the bridge himself to see the whale.

It seems that it is easier to doubt things others say about realities outside ourselves. It is much easier to believe lies we tell of and about ourselves. When we tell them long enough to ourselves and others, we really believe they are truths. Perhaps we have had the opportunities to challenge the lies others say about themselves. Jesus went around healing women and men from the lies they were living. He gave them back to themselves as on-going creations of God's Love.

Many of us can say bad things about ourselves, hoping that somebody will say to us that what we say isn't true, at least totally. We can create a total lie about ourselves based on a small negative truth which is called "over generalizing". We are never as good as we would wish. The lies come from our not believing the real, but limited truths of our being creatures.

There just might be some whales trying to swim under our bridges and we spend time feeding them with crumbs of overly-generalized or merely partial truths. The whales will die like the elephants of starvation if we don't keep running down to the river.

It is just a glimpse, no lie!