

GLIMPSE

Secret Prayers

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In my Gramma O'Connor's house there was a dark basement which had a room within a room. If we were judged to be naughty, bad, terrible, incorrigible (take your pick according to the transgression), we were threatened to be sent down to Jackson! We were not told who Jackson was, but the threats amended our behaviors at least until something more creative appeared.

One evening my brother and I avoided boredom by playing catch in the living room, by ourselves with the furry little kitchen kitten. We figured a few drops wouldn't exhaust but a few of its nine lives anyway. The Irish-Eyes arrested us in midair and the long-promised dooms-day finally arrived. We were headed for Jacksonville down stairs.

Our mother was not present as a legal-defense guardian, so down and down into the dark into the first and then the second dimly-lighted confinement. Jackson was seated in an old rocking chair, apparently asleep not having been informed of our being sentenced so unjustly. The slamming of the door did not seem to bother Jackson much though we thought he rocked a little in response to some dream he was having. He did not seem happy, his large hands across the plentiful stomach. So we stood there and Jackson sat there and only the sounds of our grandmother's walking on her squeaky wooden floors above told us there was life in the area. After a month or two, maybe five minutes, we figured we would be kind to old-man Jackson and step back out the inner-room doorway and close the door quietly behind. When we heard the matronly warden coming eventually down the basements stairs we scrambled back to accompany Jackson and awaited reprieve which came with cookies and our solemn promise to be good little boys. We both knew the violations of this promise would be matter for the next Saturday's trip to the confessional.

On Ash Wednesday, the Gospel from Matthew presented Jesus as telling His followers to go into their inner room and pray in secret. This brought up some

healed memories. Of course we eventually found out that Jackson was a huge stuffed, life-size doll whom our younger siblings would also meet and be warned about years later. Our inner rooms are not domestic recesses, but where reside many prayables, healables. Often we would rather have Jesus look within our inner rooms without our being around. We can be frightened to go down there as if many Jacksons lurked to scare us away.

Jesus does not have compassion on our sins, faults, nasties, but on us, our whole self, from our inner rooms to our attics. Jesus is less interested in the sins of our pasts than desirous of our living with our pasts healed into a more lively future. Mercy is five or ten percent judgment about what we *did in the past* and the rest is a relational embrace in what we *will do in the future*. Our inner rooms are brightened by His light which is not convicting, but confirming. Jesus is as real to us as we allow ourselves to be real to ourselves. If Jackson lives in your inner room these Lenten days, open the inner doors let the light in and nobody knows where the Jacksons go. We just know the house is clean and Jesus waits with better than cookies. It is just a glimpse God rest Jackson!