

GLIMPSE

Storytime

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There is the old saying that if you don't tell the stories you'll forget who you are. I spent seven years as Rector of our high school here in Omaha. The football team won the State Championship five years in a row. Now, over twenty-five years later, I will be at social gatherings where some of the former players begin telling their families, their fellow players and mainly themselves about this game and that play and the stories seem to reform their identities, their images.

Ethnic groups and cultural identities celebrate their heritages. There is a little town near here that has a tulip festival each spring to honor their Dutch background. My home town of Milwaukee has the largest Irish fest in the world each August. What a satisfying feeling to be in the midst of other Irish people, who like you, know 'That God does love His own' and we are they.

My father would relate how Umbrella Mike O'Conner was a relative of my mother who was an O'Conner. Mike, according to my father walked around the Chicago city hall with his closed, but open umbrella receiving monetary gifts. He also spoke of Bath House John Coughlin, but we never heard the whole story, except that he also was a distant relative of my mother. Whether true or not, myths, fables, epics, exaggerations, or real histories are ways of wearing more comfortably who we are by who went before us preparing for us to be.

The day after tomorrow a portion of us will sing, imagine, listen to and act out a story we believe is true. Other cultural and ethnic groups have stories of some kind of interventional event. There are births of specially-recognized persons. Some divine objectification made visible. Those groups, as do we, recall so as to remember and reform their names, their posture.

The major question is whether I like the story and like who that story says that I am. I love being "born-for"; I love the poverty of the Maker of all things. I love uneducated watchers of sheep at night believing what they wonderingly heard and how they left their sheep just as I would. Do I love the stories and that's why

they are real? I love the stories, because they make me more really who I am. There is a problem of course in telling the stories too often; they lose their power, their impact.

Once a year does not seem too often to tell this story, our story. If we can take the time, use our senses, our imaginations, our memories, there will always be something new, which will bring something new into you. The old footballers do varnish and garnish their memories, but always there seems to be something shared and given to each as part of their ongoing creation. They like themselves a little bit more for their exploits long ago. Their memories bring them back to real touchdowns, blocks, tackles, conversations and never the losses. They are even more than they were then, because the stories, even the exaggerations, are as real as they are.

We can go to the stable with the shepherds, with Joseph, or alone. We can let it be according to Your Word. We can stand or kneel or stay outside. There are elements of who we are available in the story made our story if and when we listen. The Santa-story is for children and rightly so, because the real story is way too much, even for us olders. Would you like it to have happened just that way? How different would you write the script? Go ahead and see.

We listen to the story to remember who we were from the beginning, are now, and will always be, those for whom the story is still being written. It is only a glimpse and I love what I have heard.