Chocolate for the Souls of St. Leo’s

Things happen. At my usual sojourn on Tuesday mornings at the Sunflower Café on the Plaza with the Shea’s and Randy Coleman-Riese, Randy presented us with a St. Leo’s parish publication from around 1998-2000 under the title shown above. I had forgotten completely about it.

It was a project in which parishioners up to that period were invited to write an essay, long or short, about their faith story – I think the Youth Ministry leaders were behind it – and JoAnn Consiglieri. The writings are almost conversational focusing on some memory of what it means to be Catholic. Parents’ brief accounts of a child’s experience – not always of church - are fun to read.

This one was heard during a CCD class: While working on their poster projects of “I Am Special,” the children were asked to color a birthday cake and draw candles on top . . . corresponding to their age. Chirped one little boy, “Oh, yeah, I know all about candles. They were for before we had electrocution.”

Another was titled A Call in the Night: My grandpa had been sick for quite a while, and eventually, we realized death was near. On the day he died, our phone rang at exactly 5 o’clock. There was only one ring, which was odd . . . so early in the morning. Then . . . my grandma called our house from the hospital to say my grandpa had died at 5 o’clock. Our family now believes this one ring was my grandpa saying goodbye.

June England contributed: It was a Friday evening wedding rehearsal at St. John the Baptist Church in Chico. I was the matron of honor. Next to me was the ring bearer, a small boy of six who had never been in a Catholic church. This was the 60’s, before the church had divested itself of its Gothic trappings. The red sanctuary light glowed, hinting at the life-sized figures imprisoned in their walled recesses. The boy moved in close to me, and looking up at me with big brown eyes, whispered, “Did anyone ever escape?”

And this one from Gert Dunphy (remember her?): Since I was an only child, my greatest pleasure was a ride with my favorite uncle, Tom, and his three children . . . He always told us stories (a wild imagination) and sang songs, and my cousins and I joined in, singing as loud as we possibly could. The trips in his car were never, never too long. No one ever asked, “When are we going to get there . . .”

The titles of the essays were like: I Remember Uncle Frankie . . . ; Wartime Romance; At the Plate; Daddy’s Other Name; First Piano Lessons; You Just Never Know.

And then there is this one about a woman that sums up all there is to say about our pastor those days: For what seemed like the 100th time, she could not get up the courage to approach Father O’Hare. A previous marriage was preventing her from being comfortable about talking about remarrying. Just then a voice behind her said, “You’ve been wanting to talk to me, haven’t you, love?” I don’t even have to tell you who it was and what happened. The contributor of this event titled it: Divine Intervention.

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