

Waiting for God to show up

The term “catch” can be defined as a hidden factor that undercuts one’s intended action – as in the film *Catch 22* where a man in WWII has flown too many bombing missions and feigns insanity to acquire a discharge – only to overlook the catch: that if after so many dangerous missions he wants a discharge, he *can’t* be insane! So the request is denied.

In another scene Bob Newhart plays the airbase Laundry Officer. His surname is Major. Major is also his rank, so he is known as Major Major. He has an office and a sergeant receptionist named Towser. *From now on*, says Major Major, *I don’t want anyone to come into my office to see me while I’m here. Is that clear?* Towser asks if that includes him. *Yes*. Towser then asks what he should say to people who come to see the Major while he is in the office. Major Major says: *Tell them I’m in and ask them to wait*. Towser asks for how long. *Until I’ve left*. Towser then asks how Major Major will be able to leave when there is someone in the waiting room. Major replies: *Through the window. From now on I’ll be coming and going through the window. I don’t want to see anyone, and I don’t want anyone to see me. Is that clear?* Continuing the logic of this exchange, Towser asks if he may send visitors in to see Major Major after he has left. *Yes*, says the Major – to which Towser says: *But you won’t be here, then, will you?* *No. That will be all*. After which Major Major puts on his fake mustache and sunglasses and climbs out the window.

Reading that script made me wonder whether it can serve as a parable of the way God deals with us. He’s there, we believe that. But has anyone ever seen him? Could he be like Major Major, wanting us to populate his waiting room but always absconding by an office window – his receptionists keeping us at bay? Why all these Gospel accounts that tell us in so many ways to stay awake, be ready, he’s coming, when the only “real presence” or palpable contact we have is by way of bread and wine?

And yet, *everything* we see and touch and the air we breathe, the soil under my feet, the morning glories on my lawn, the ever changing shape of the clouds, the beauty of faces, the stars like spectators focused on our planet . . . all of creation - like our sacraments - is an epiphany of our Source and Origin. That’s what our faith and *poetic* intelligence tell us. It is *we* who are “buried” treasure, hiding, unable to come out into the open sky above us, preferring to be unseen, safe. It is *you* who, though a priceless pearl, would hide your worth amid the stuff of a world that defines you as a mere “human resource”.

And let’s not forget *time*. Time is a sacrament as much as baptism; we are immersed in time, moments that happen when you wake up to something like a teacher’s affirmation of a thing you wrote and your life begins to change, becomes more serious. Or when something makes you think, pause, change an opinion that once held your life in bondage - when you became other than you were weeks or years ago. Far from God being hidden, there are so many ways in which the Holy comes out of hiding, comes out of its office into a waiting room to take a personal interest in you. It usually happens at a moment you least expect; indeed, when *you* yourself appear as the grace of God in our midst.

