

Crisis of Faith

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When I consider how smug I was some years ago in my faith, I cringe. I've heard it said that you only have true faith once you have come through a period in the desert. I'd never say that is a requirement – God alone knows the answer to that one – but I will say that I certainly didn't know what my faith was until after a desert period in my life.

I had been an active member of my parish, St. Matthew's, Universal City, for about 12 or 13 years when the bottom dropped out. Within a space of about 5 years I had dealt with the loss of both of my parents, the painful and unexpected ending of a marriage of 25 years, and ups and downs in the lives of my kids; I thought I had handled it all pretty well. People told me how amazing it was that I was still holding it all together so well in the light of all the struggles I'd been through and I have to admit I was pretty proud of myself in that. Then in May of 2000 I was blessed to attend a Cursillo weekend and I discovered that I was missing a major part in my spiritual walk; I had no idea who Christ really was. I had no personal relationship with Him – didn't even really know that I could. I began a new walk with Him and all was wonderful, except that suddenly I felt as if I was falling apart. I cried at everything, had next to no control over my emotions and I was terrified.

One particular day my spiritual director and I met; one of the things that he said to me, and actually had probably said before, was that I'd been shoving things down for so long I didn't know how to feel anymore. The problem with shoving things down is that eventually they will come out – one way or another. I did not want to hear that; as a matter of fact I was somewhat indignant. I'd handled it all pretty well and knew that God was with me, so it was dealt with. But it wasn't. I was falling apart and pretty angry, first with God that He wasn't "fixing" me, and then also with myself that I couldn't just toughen up and deal with it. I prayed, I went for healing prayers, I did everything I could think of – and nothing I did worked. I felt alone in a way that had little or nothing to do with my living alone; I felt alone and distant from God. My brain told me that He was there and yet I couldn't find him.

Wise friends were strong and loving enough to say, again, that I needed help and finally I gave in. I was fairly quickly diagnosed with clinical depression and placed on an anti-depressant; something I had resisted for quite a while. And soon after, I began to be able to breathe and realized that my stubbornness was what was causing me to be unable to find God. He had been there the whole time, but I was holding Him at bay with my pain. My gratitude to Him for loving me through the long desert period knows no bounds and my recognition of the gift of healing He is working in me constantly amazes me. He is a faithful God – and I like to say a God of silver linings. Hindsight being 20 / 20 is one of the joys of getting older (or shall we say more mature?). I can see His redemption in the ending of my marriage, in the friends He has provided me, in the change in my employment, and in my ministry opportunities both at church and in my job. I see it more clearly every day and Thanks be to God am able to share some of that with others.

