Christmas: 12/25/22—10:00 PM and 9:30 AM

St. Paul writes these beautiful words in the first chapter of his letter to the Ephesians: ***In him and through his blood, we have been redeemed, and our sins forgiven, so immeasurably generous is God’s favor to us….so immeasurably generous is God’s favor to us….so immeasurably generous.*** Today, Christmas, we focus on the birth of Jesus in a smelly stable who was then placed in a far-from-antiseptic food trough we call a manger. Today we celebrate that immeasurably generous favor, that immeasurably generous love, God has for us. Then in a few months from now, we will focus once again on that immeasurably generous love for us as manifested by the death of Jesus and his Resurrection. However, if we focus on Jesus’ birth, death, and Resurrection as the only manifestations of God’s immeasurably generous favor and love for us, I think we handicap ourselves from truly appreciating how immeasurably generous are God’s favor and love for us.

One of my favorite books is this one, **There Is A God: How the world’s most notorious atheist changed his mind** by Antony Flew, a philosopher and writer who from the age of sixteen was a confirmed atheist until in his later years when he changed his mind. He gives three reasons for his doing so. First, he sites, as did Albert Einstein, the pre-existence of the laws of nature which had to be present before anything else existed; otherwise it couldn’t have existed. Second, if the Big Bang took place, an event that no astronomer denies, then there had to a source from which the matter came into existence. Third was the ability to think and reproduce which inanimate things could not do on their own. My point in focusing his book is: Don’t the laws of nature, the stuff that makes up the Universe, and our ability to think and reproduce plus all those 200 sextillion stars with their planets manifest our God’s immeasurably generous favor and love?

Then too, what about looking at our own family histories? Aren’t they also manifestations of God’s immeasurably generous favor and love for us? As I have mentioned before, my sister Dianne is our family’s genealogist having studied and researched our family’s history on all four sides. On all four sides, it’s all German, and they all came to the US in the 1850s and 1860s, plus they were all Catholics. As with your ancestors, think of the baptisms, the Masses, the Communions, the prayers that they prayed and how they witnessed to their faith, even how their faith in God was strong enough that they were willing to leave everything that they knew to board and travel on that masted sailing ship for probably two months to come here and start new lives. Their awareness of God’s immeasurably generous favor and love would have had to be a part of their motivation plus that awareness also influenced them as they then shaped us.

In addition to thinking about that immeasurably generous favor and love as manifested scientifically and historically, I think we need to remember the “small miracles” we experience which also manifest that love and favor of God. I always like the definition of “coincidence” as “a small miracle in which God chooses to act anonymously,” and those small miracles happen all the time. I had one of those “small miracles” a few weeks ago which almost knocked my socks off. It happened at, of all places, Ted Drewes. As I was walking up to the window to order a concrete, there was this group of four people who approached from the other direction one of whom had a Texas shirt on. I don’t have the time to go into all of the details, but we both realized that we were eighth grade classmates who hadn’t seen each other for over sixty years!Please think about all the similar small miracles you have experienced. Don’t they manifest God’s love for you too?

Back in the early 1980s, I was stationed at Assumption Parish in O’Fallon. One of the things I used to do, when the weather was nice, was to sit on a tombstone in the parish cemetery, close my eyes, and just listen. It’s amazing what you can hear when you just listen. I could hear kids at the local swimming pool, cars going by on the street, airplanes flying over, bugs zipping past, wind whistling in my ears, and, when it there were no other sounds, I could hear that hissing sound of the blood flowing past my ear drums, a sound often drowned out by other sounds but the sound had to be there, the flowing of my blood, for me to be able for me to hear all of those other sounds. Isn’t God’s immeasurably generous love and favor like the blood flowing past our ear drums? Like that blood, God’s love is always there. Often we let God’s love for us to be “drowned out” by other concerns and priorities, but, without God’s love, those other concerns and priori-ties have no meaning. Please remember that our awareness of God’s immeasurably generous love and favor is as essential to us spiritually as the blood flowing through our bodies is essential to us physically.