

# When we least expect it, God is working

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |

While attending a private Catholic school from ages 3-11, I learned many things about God. Between daily religion class, weekly Mass and endless discussions about what it meant to be a Christian, I thought I knew pretty much everything about what it meant to be a follower of Christ. However, in the midst of reflection recently, it became crystal clear that I had only been experiencing those years mechanically.

Of course, I still loved Christ and appreciated his sacrifice, but it was as though he felt too distant from me to form a bond beyond a one-sided admiration. At the time, I had not yet been placed in a situation where a foundational knowledge of Christ would not suffice. I subconsciously lived under the impression that I would not have to endure a test of my faith.

It was not until I made the transition to public school in seventh grade that my eyes were opened. My class increased by almost 150, and I was placed in a new environment with unfamiliar faces, many of whom seemed to no longer share the same values as me — something that I had not anticipated.

It felt like the bubble I had grown up in suddenly popped, and soon, I was sent down a long road of confusion regarding whether my relationship with God was good enough.

I spent many years in a haze during this transitional stage regarding where I stood in my faith. I continued to attend Mass and maintained daily prayer, but I was unable to pinpoint the role God was supposed to be playing in my life. The connection I had lacked with God in the years prior still remained missing as I attempted to navigate through the years that followed.

It was not until attending a youth rally in my 10th-grade year that I was redirected in my faith. There, I was moved by a testimony from a kid my age who spoke of a similar situation. I found it admirable that they were able to share their story of personal conflict with a room full of people while I had yet to admit my own conflict to myself.

Leaving the retreat inspired, I found comfort in the fact that I was not alone in feeling lost in my faith. I realized that God had sent me there to find reassurance in him, and I knew that the first step in reconstructing our relationship was simply to allow him into my life. Because early on, I prayed to God as if he were remote, I realized that altering how I spoke to him could help me foster a new perception of him.

With this in mind, I began speaking to God as if he were a friend rather than a notion. This simple modification in my prayer life made a significant difference; I noticed God feeling much closer to me as the gap that had once existed slowly disappeared.

Even though there is room for growth in my relationship, I feel blessed during times of reflection that despite my unknowingness, God has been present throughout every stage of my life, even those where I felt isolated, mystified and ignorant in my faith. His abundant love prevails through the inevitability that I am flawed and am destined to fall victim to sin again and again. The beauty is, however, that I will never be forsaken by him.

A Bible verse that comes to mind that captures the lessons I have learned is Proverbs 3:5-6:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” Although in times of doubt, it can be difficult to fall back on the Lord, we must stay steadfast in his trust and continue to seek out fulfillment in his promise. For it is often in the times we least expect it that God is working within us the most.

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