

By Pat Haggerty

You know yourselves---every once in awhile we need a reality check! It is something that will jolt us back to where we should be, or it will provide us with an opportunity to *reflect* on where we should be. The best reality checks are really the “aha” moments that happen in our lives. No matter the form of your reality check, I believe they are a grace from God. We don't necessarily wish them to happen---they just do! And, when they do, we should simply give thanks.

I sometimes associate these reality checks with humbling experiences that are thrust upon us. St. Peter advises us in his first letter to “clothe ourselves in humility.” That involves our personal choice and action. We are the doers of this action and we select to do it (be humble). However, there are times when God is gracious and He just provides us with a humbling experience. We know instantly when they are happening, and we revel in their power. It's what we do after that is the important thing.

Let me share with you two unrelated and very different humbling experiences that have served as my reality check recently. I praise God for these experiences and I ask his grace that I might grow from them.

A few weeks ago I went on a trip to Las Vegas. No, I wasn't expecting to win thousands or even come back with a little pocket money. My husband and I were going to attend a relatives wedding, and so we decided to take in some sights while we were there. We took a train ride from Williams, Arizona, to the Grand Canyon. The train ride itself was amazing. It was like stepping back in time. It was complete with an amusing conductor, a singing cowboy and even some masked bandits. But, that's not really my story. What happened once we got to the Grand Canyon was the biggest reality check ever. It was humbling in its vastness and awesome in its magnitude. If you've ever been to the Grand Canyon, you know what I am talking about. It literally takes your breath away---not just because you are so close to the precipice of a huge canyon but because you are seeing something that is one of the Seven Wonders of the World! At that moment you are humbled by the panorama and thankful for God's gifts to us. I walked away from it with gratitude in my heart for God's intense love for us and for His majesty and power. I want to keep the mental picture of that vast beauty in my mind's eye and keep that feeling of humility and awesomeness in my heart. If that fails, I can always refresh myself with the pictures on my cell phone.

I did refer to another humbling experience. Although not related, they bear some connection. When I returned from my trip, life continued as usual. The reality of my daily routines was set in motion. I was no longer sitting by the pool on a beautiful sunny day or admiring an arboretum in a magnificent hotel. One of the things I do, as you know, is bring the Eucharist to some of the shut-ins in our parish. I have mentioned this before. I bring this up again because this experience to me is a perfect example of God giving me the grace of humility---providing me with a constant humbling experience.

I went to give Communion to Rose (not her real name), and the first words out of her mouth were, "How was your trip? Tell me about Vegas." She wasn't thinking about herself but about me. There she was, wheelchair bound, unable to move on her own, showing real interest in me. It is doubtful she will ever get to Vegas. The confines of her little apartment seem to be her boundaries. I am not sure. All I do know is that here is this woman with numerous issues, who has to live with a personal assistant to provide her with simple daily help. In her own way, she is so giving, kind, and God-centered. Whenever I leave her, she will always say: "God bless."

I do believe that God is blessing me through Rose. In those brief weekly interactions, He is providing me with moments of humility. I can truly understand how small I am; how meek I should be; and, yet, how generous I need to become.

Try to reflect on some of your humbling experiences. What are they doing for you?