

Greetings, everyone.

Those of you who have known me (and have had to listen to me!) for years, and even those of you who have only known me for a few months, have probably heard me say this before. However, in this time when we're rewatching favourite movies and going-back to well-loved books, I'm going to risk repeating myself.

I think you can learn a lot about a person's character by the way she or he interacts with a grocery store check-out clerk. Some people go through the entire transaction without even acknowledging the clerk's presence. I've seen people put-out their hand for their change without even looking. And now that we can pay by tapping or using our phone or watch, it's even easier to avoid any human interaction. Sad.

Now, Glenn and I know our regular clerks by their first names... that's just us. But even if you're being served by someone you've never seen before and may never see again, it is a moment to live what you believe. That people matter. That eye contact, a smile, a "thank-you" can say "you are a human being and I see you."

Glenn was in our regular grocery store last week and was served by a young woman he hadn't seen before. But, he made a point of thanking her for working and being here for the rest of us. She looked at him, and for a moment seemed to fight back tears before smiling and saying thank-you. When he told me, I wondered how many impatient and angry customers had taken-out their perceived inconvenience on this young woman. What kind of fear does she have to overcome in this age of self-isolation just to come to work and serve the public, only to have most of them not even bother to get off their phones and acknowledge her presence?

Before I start to rant too much, let me get to the point. This isn't a public service announcement from your local grocery store. It's a reminder of who we are: people who believe that people matter. I believe that whenever we make a connection with another human being, a connection of the human spirit, that encounter opens up space for the divine spirit to enter. A moment when something beautiful happens. Even if it just reminds us that we are here, that we are noticed, that we matter, and that we are not alone. Even if that moment just changes us and helps us be open to possibility. Our sacred story, in scripture and experience, reminds us that this connection is special. Vital. We speak of hospitality; of taking time to connect with another. Think again about how many times Biblical stories begin with people sitting down to share a meal, a drink, a moment. And then, when that connection is made, God makes something beautiful happen. That's probably why church people eat together so much! We know how important those moments of connection are. So that's why I always go back to the example of how we interact - or don't - with grocery store clerks. A simple everyday example of who we chose to be. Do we believe that people matter? That spiritual connection can be a powerful thing? That a simple moment of being genuinely in the presence of another can be a moment of possibility?

May first is known in many places around the world as May Day. It has its roots in ancient celebrations of spring and new life. It was a time of joy and new birth. People danced around decorated May poles with baskets of flowers. I'm sure you get the symbolism. When the Puritans arrived here, they thought the whole thing was far too naughty, and the celebration was abandoned. In the nineteenth century, May Day became a time to honour workers, and at the height of the industrial revolution the labour movement used the celebration to draw attention to appalling working conditions. Apparently, in 1894 U.S. President Grover Cleveland was concerned that such focus smelled a bit too communist, so our September Labour Day was created to further protect us from the joy of May Day.

But maybe this year is a good time to remember this day. I'll leave the decision of whether or not you want to dance around a May pole up to you (but you have my blessing!)... but this might be a good time to do two things that are a part of this day's history. First, acknowledge the life around you. If you can't get outside, at least look out your window and give thanks for the buds on the trees. Through creation, the Creator is reminding us, in this time of sickness, death, and fear, that life wins. We will get through this. So sing. Dance. Pray. Give thanks.

Secondly, make a point of remembering all of those who are working so hard on our behalf. So many have been there for us this past month in so many ways. And now as more people start going back to work, we need to remember them. Express your gratitude. Don't take anyone for granted. Let people know that we are all in this together. And that we are grateful. Also, take time to remember those who can't work. Especially at the beginning of the month when rent might be due. God bless all of those who continue to work at and support food banks.

Whether we give, share food, say thanks, or even make eye contact with another to say "I see you... you matter"... we do so because of who we are: a people who are blessed and loved... a people who know that life wins.

God bless you all. Thanks for being family.

love and hugs.

Rev. Steve