

Traveling Companion: The green, green grass of somewhere!

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Recently, I was invited to exchange pulpits with St. Joan of Arc parish in Powell, Ohio. Some time ago, some adults and young people from that parish came to Bay St. Louis to help our parish and community in its recovery process.

As I flew into Columbus airport, I noticed the lush green fields below. They were organized like a giant quilt spread out over a gentle earth.

Following my arrival at the airport, I was whisked to my weekend abode. We skirted downtown Columbus as cars journeyed along, like a colony of ants, busily going some place important.

I was enamored by the green trees that stood to attention as we passed by. Nestled among them, I noticed generous green spaces, drinking in the shade afforded by the tall trees.

Finally, we turned into a street where the priests' residence awaited us. The trees formed a guard of honor for us as they led us to our final destination.

Why did the green, green grass of somewhere in Ohio make such an impression on me? Why was I not enthralled by the hustle and bustle of a large city as it shot skywards? I mused over some possible answers for a while.

The obvious answer was that, coming from a part of the earth scorched by Hurricane Katrina; this was such a contrast.

I had read stories about and witnessed the impact of the hurricane on our remaining trees; how the salinity of the Gulf waters choked them. Now, the stark contrast was obvious.

Another reason why the green grass of somewhere impacted me was that it was a reminder of hope.

As a gentle rain washed their bodies, allowing them to draw strength from a giving earth; I saw new life, new possibilities; the everlasting nature of hope.

Daily, as I trudge through the ashes and browned remains of Hurricane Katrina, I need something to remind me that the earth will be reborn and, we will have green, green grass, not of somewhere else, but of home.

A third reason why the green, green grass of somewhere impacted me is far simpler. When we go to visit a large city, usually we are interested in its sights, sounds and movement. The buzz of activity excites us. The pace of life quickens us. The diversity of opportunities invites us. But, this time, none of these more usual things excited me. Just a lush green earth, blanketed and speckled with a generous supply of trees, uplifted my spirit and planted a renewed sense of hope within me.

Now that I have returned to the parched lands of my surroundings, I brought back with me a renewed hope that a new normality might include an evergreen again. As I walk on the bare ground, hardened by a lack of rain; hungry for nourishment; poisoned by a dose of foreign salinity; I hope and pray that beneath the surface, with a gentle encouragement from God and some natural elements; life may spring forth once again. Maybe and hopefully, a new green grass of somewhere will find a more permanent home around me. Maybe, just maybe, the cycle of life might find its true rhythm again. Maybe, from the ashes of drought and despair a new phoenix may arise. Maybe, that part of me which died in Hurricane Katrina will not stay dormant and forgotten but, instead, may find new wellsprings of life to spring forth. Maybe, finally, Easter will not just be a season but a constant greening of our nature, our spirits, our souls and our lives so that we will be evergreen everywhere.