

Springtime Breakfast

On the morning of the first Saturday of March, I did my usual morning stroll along the byroad by the side of my house. Seeing that it was Saturday, most people slept in later than usual. I always take advantage of my morning stroll as it gives me an opportunity, before the busyness of the day begins, to drink in some quiet time in order to journey deeper into my heart.

Seeing that I was spending my first springtime in Ireland, my thoughts drifted back to childhood memories when, as kids, we would get up early and rush into the fields to see if there were any newborn lambs born during the night. Some time, we would enjoy the privilege of actually seeing the lamb being born.

As I passed a field dotted with sheep, I peered to try and see if there were any newborn lambs. Then, I heard a mother's distinctive call and a response that she recognized. I marveled at the communication. I wondered at the distinctive call of the mother which was instinctively recognized by her children. It was as if I heard the mother calling her children and saying to them, "Children, breakfast is ready. Come and get it!"

The response from the children was immediate. There were no excuses like the human kind: "I'm not hungry!" or "I will in a minute" or "I don't like what you're cooking." The twin lambs scurried to their mother's side as, instinctively, they reached for the warm milk of nature's kindness that only a mother sheep could give. I stood and watched the feeding and noticed the excitement of the twins as they tugged away at the mother's milk.

From that simple, yet profound, encounter, I learned two lessons that put the scriptures in perspective for me. First of all, it reminded me of the story of the call of Samuel in 1 Samuel chapter 3. Samuel mistakenly thinks that Eli is calling him in the middle of the night. He goes to Eli twice and says, "Here, I am, you called me." When he finds out that Eli is not calling him, he goes back to sleep only to hear the voice calling him again. This time, with the guidance of Eli, he discovers that it is the Lord who is calling.

Listening to the distinctive calls of the sheep, I am in awe of how tuned in sheep are to the voice of their children and how the children can recognize immediately the call of their mothers. I am also amazed at how such distinctive voice call can be coded in a such a way as, in one case, to invite someone to breakfast or, in another way, to warn them of impending danger from wolves, foxes or marauding dogs.

Secondly, the experience reminded me of the call of the Lord, to come and eat, come with your hunger pains and burdens and be refreshed. Maybe, it is ironic that Jesus so often used imagery of farmers, of sheep, of being the Good Shepherd calling people to enjoy the milk of human kindness in greener pastures.

Finally, as we approach Easter, I am drawn deeper into the pastoral scene of the mother and twins. A mother sheep goes through the birth pangs to give of herself so that a new springtime, a new life, a future may be born.

A mother sheep, journeyed through her own labor pains alone and in silence, in the dark of night to provide new offspring to be loved and nourished. Jesus journeyed through his own life giving passion to ensure a new springtime for all.

There is something special about springtime. It is not only the planting season, but also a season of hope, a season of new beginnings, a season of transitions and transformations. As Christians, we go through our own incubation period during the season of Lent in order to be renewed, refreshed, reborn into an eternal springtime.

Yes, I was privileged to see a new springtime in nature. I was privileged to encounter a coded and responded to language between mother and her twins. And, because of the feasting that ensued, I was lead deeper into my own paschal mystery.

Tomorrow, I will again hope for another Easter gift in nature as well as within myself.

