

Traveling Companion: Food for thought

Fr. Michael Tracey

Usually, at our weekend Masses, I find out who might be visiting from other parishes and areas of the country. I try to recognize them and make them feel welcome in our midst. In the course of the years, I met some very interesting people from interesting places and countries.

Recently, at our Saturday evening Mass, a middle aged gentleman introduced himself as Josh. He just moved into the area from San Jose, California. Following Mass, I noticed some people greeting and welcoming him. Finally, he began walking down the aisle toward the exit door. I stood in the aisle ready to find out more about this gentleman.

Josh was working in Silicon Valley, California as a computer specialist and developer. He just lost his job and had come to the area to live with a friend to adjust to being unemployed.

He talked about his creative research work and mentioned that he had lost several jobs along the way because of downsizing and other issues.

He indicated that his wife had gone to visit her parents in Kansas. "They are in their 80's and she had a very difficult time as a child growing up. They have a very strained relationship because of it. But now, she wants to make peace with herself and with them before it is too late."

He mentioned how he was impressed with the beauty of our church and then said, "I am not much of a churchgoer. You know, we, scientists, are a skeptical group. While I might accept the theory that there is a God, I really don't spend any time practicing a religion."

He then began to share some more about his experience. He said, "Some years ago, I was between jobs and I decided to visit my sister in Florida for a while. She invited me to go to church with her and so I did. In the course of the Mass, the priest was giving out some black book. My sister asked me if I wanted one and I told her I didn't. Then, something strange happened. I heard a voice inside say to me, "Take one." I did take one of the books. I found the whole thing a bit strange for a scientist like me."

He continued, "You know that chip in a cell phone that allows you to take a picture with the cell phone," I nodded my affirmation. "Well, I was the one that invented that chip." How interesting, I thought to myself.

The conversation continued. "One time, I was trying to figure out something in my life and I was getting nowhere. Then I heard a voice inside me say, 'Read the Bible.'" Strange as it may seem, I did open a bible and began to read and found the answer to the problem I was wrestling with."

On a more philosophical note, he asked, ready to answer himself, "Do you know why God really created us?" I waited for his answer. "What does God see in us? What can we do for God? You see, to God, we humans are food." A little puzzled by his concept, I allowed him to explain some more. "What does food do for us? It nourishes us. So we nourish God. That's why he needs us. He needs us for nourishment. Another thing! I was never much into this group church thing. But now, I am beginning to see it differently. We come together to nourish God and God nourishes us. There is power in nourishing God in numbers."

A few minutes later, he concluded by saying, "Father, I know you have things to do. I won't take up any more of your time. I will see you soon again." With that, we shook hands and he departed into the evening darkness.

For a few brief minutes, I enjoyed entering the mind of a scientist and briefly encountering his perspective on things, especially God and even how a "voice inside" can also get the attention of a probing, skeptical scientist.