**The Wonder of Ordinary Time**

**(Column 117: April 15, 2024)**

By Lucia A. Silecchia

By now, the eclipse glasses have been put away. The photos of the April 8 nature show have all been posted to Facebook and Instagram to prove that it really happened. The stories from the day have, likewise, also been told – ranging from the “wow” from those in the path of totality to the “meh” from those who saw a partial eclipse through a cloud shrouded sky.

I was in the latter camp since my cloudy neighborhood seemed merely and anticlimactically overcast. Yet, it was still a “wow” day. For me, the excitement was not what I saw in the heavens. It was, rather, what I saw here on earth. For a day, I saw busy people catch their breath and look skywards. I saw genuine excitement about a natural sky show. I saw all too cynical people embracing the excitement, without seeming self-conscious at all.

Since then, I have wondered why. Perhaps it was simply a case of FOMO, the fear of missing out of a big event. Perhaps it was mere curiosity. Perhaps it was the desire to be part of something bigger and to be connected to others even if only for a few minutes.

Perhaps it was something else.

Perhaps there is, in all of us, the search for wonder. Perhaps there is the fervent hope to catch a glimpse of the face of God in those things that seem far bigger than ourselves. Like many, I learned more about eclipses these past weeks than I have ever known before. To my amazement, I learned that the sun is both 400 times larger than the moon and 400 times further away. This is a symmetry that demands wonder at the One who made it thus. What demands even more wonder is that He also cares deeply and completely for each one of us.

I almost wished, for a while, that I had become a student of science because that seems a direct path to the divine. It is not surprising that so many great men and women of science have been, through the centuries, people of deep religious faith. It is perhaps far more surprising that any true scientist can remain unconvinced of God.

Yet, we do not have to wait for the next eclipse to keep that sense of divine wonder. I am a person of little patience, so I cannot wait until 2044 when an eclipse next returns to the continental United States!

Fortunately, every single day, I can see a flash of a sunset and the rise of a silver moon and know that Christ himself once gazed on them too. I can listen to the roar of an ocean and know that God filled the seas. I can see a bird fly and marvel at how well engineered the tiniest feathered creature is, or watch a cat lie in wait for that same bird and wonder how well designed the lowliest feline is.

I can see a butterfly and know that nothing exactly like it has flown before or will again. I can see a crocus burst from what was just soil a day ago and wonder how it got there.

I can be dwarfed by a tree whose peak I cannot see or be amazed at photographs of the cacti that dot our deserts and the creatures that fill the dark depths of the oceans.

I can look at a coral reef or smell the first rose of summer and know that I need not look to the heavens for a rare burst of wonder. I can touch the tiny toes of the smallest child or gaze into the gleaming eyes of a great-grandmother and be left without words. There is so much that inspires awe down here too.

As the eclipse of 2024 recedes in memory, I hope that it leaves in its wake that sense of wonder that turned our eyes upward. May that same wonder also turn our hearts upward, to the God who gave us all the extraordinary splendor that fills our ordinary time.

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