God on Tour

George Dillard

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol1987/iss1/27
Here I am again. It's 10:00 Sunday morning. I'm attending church when I should be home dreaming of pirates or movie stars. I suppose if Mother is happy, I can live with Father Smithy, this room, and God for an hour.

The church smell is definitely strong today. The combination of incense, candle wax, and Holy Spirit is lingering thickly. I wonder if it gets on my clothes like cigarette smoke and that's how people know if I've just come from church.

I wonder who woke up early enough to come today. I see that I'm blessed with the same two old birds, er, ladies rather, that always manage to sit in the pew in front of me. They just exist there with their flower print dresses, arthritic hands, infinite facial wrinkles, horn-rimmed glasses, and scarf-covered gray hair as if they were a couple of rag dolls flopped on a shelf. When they sing, they remind me of Deep Throat from All The President's Men.

Oh my gosh, there's that gorgeous girl that I've been concentrating on lately. I wonder if I should smile at her. Maybe she'll smile back. I'm going to give it a try. Cheese! Oh, she wasn't looking. No, lady, I wasn't smiling at you. Those tight jeans sure hug her hips. I know that I would love to hug her—wait, I'm in church. I shouldn't be thinking thoughts such as that. But her pink fuzzy sweater and seductive cinnamon-colored eyes turn my control switch to excited. I just try not to ponder over her cute dimples and shapely--

Owww! Somebody just plucked a bald patch into the back of my head.

"Bobby! Stop that this instant!"

Hip hip hurrah. I get to sit in front of Bobby Wilson this week. Little Bobby makes Darth Vader seem like Tweety Bird. Bobby likes to play with his toy truck in the middle of mass. He enjoys sending it down the pew while everyone is standing. I think he likes to see how far he can make it travel before the people sit back down.

Bobby's mother is in complete contrast to her over energetic little Bobby. She's not even thirty and she's the proud owner of many streaks of gray in her dark hair. She talks in a high-pitched gritted teeth tone. And I don't know if it's my imagination, but her eyes seem to glow when she gets the opportunity to snatch little Bobby from beneath the pew and swat his little behind.

There's Mr. Birdseye, the usher. I think he came to the church as part of deal package from God. He's always shuffling up and down the aisle, in the same old blue suit, seating people. He purses and unpurses his lips, making his jowls wiggle. He's a pleasant old fellow, but he reeks of cheap cologne and hair oil. I wonder who he's seating now. Oh no, it's Mrs Weatherbee.

Mrs. Weatherbee is a blonde lady approximately forty-five years of age. She wears a long, flowing cape to mass every week. Her hair is always stacked upon her head. Today it leans at a peculiar angle. She must have used an extra can of hair spray this morning. The most irritating thing about Mrs. Weatherbee is that she loves to sing in church. In my opinion, the woman should audition for a touring opera cast.

"Please rise and greet our celebrant, Father Smithy, as we sing number 405 in the Worship Two," Amazing Graze."
I guess I'm obligated to stand up now. Here comes Father Smithy. His
gray hair is disheveled as usual. His cool gray eyes glint behind black-rimmed
glasses. I will have to admit that "Amazing Graze" sounds better coming from
Mrs. Weatherbee than from the hoarse rasp of either Father Smithy or two old
ladies in front of me.

I see that he made it to the altar without tripping over the folds of
his robes. It's time for the greeting.

"The Lord be with you."
"And also with you."
"Lift up your hearts."
"Let us give thanks to the Lord our God."
"It is right to give him thanks and praise."
"Good morning, everyone."

Yes, good morning, Father. I wish he'd cut the greeting shot and not
drag it out with his stupid jokes and bits of humor.

He must have read my mind. He's already up to the forgiveness of sins.
His style resembles that of Brother Kenneth Copeland or Reverend Jerry
Falwell.

"... turn those sins loose and concentrate on what good you can do..."

Good. We get to sit down and listen to some scripture as read to us by
Chester Hill and his whiny Richard Simmons voice. The reading is a fairy tale
about the fisherman who gives up his fishing career so he can bump around with
Jesus Christ. I can't see anyone relinquishing a good job with a good
pension, food on the table every night, and a good social position to wander
aimlessly around the country with a guy that looks similar to Ted Nugent and
be persecuted by everyone he meets.

It's time for the responsorial psalm.

"The way of the Lord is one of good and righteousness. One we should
all follow."
"The Lord is good to me. I will hold him in my heart."
"Leave the path of evil and follow the trail of God."
"The Lord is good to me. I will hold him in my heart."

Yeah, yeah. This is nothing but a cheer. He says 'go' and we say
'fight'. This is taking longer than I was hoping it would. I wonder if we're
stopping for juice and doughnuts after mass today.

"Pssst.' Hey, Dad. Are we stopping for doughnuts and juice after mass?"

Hmmm. I didn't get any response except a glare from my mother.

At least we get to sit down again. The only problem is that we have to
hear another reading. I suppose some small sacrifices must be made. At least
that's what the Bible says.

Once again, it's time to stand up. Up, down, up, down. Did I make a
mistake and sit in on an aerobics class this morning instead?

"...a reading of the Gospel from Luke to the Corinthians." I think
that's the same as reading people's mail without permission.

At this point in the mass, everybody must develop an itch on their
forehead, their lips, and their breast. Then they must scratch all three, in
that order, with their right thumb. I don't understand it.

Thank you, God. The gospel was short. So now I get to sit down again.
Father Smithy leans on the podium as usual, giving his sermon.

"...so Jesus took the man..."

My head feels light.

"...reminds me of a lady I knew..."
“...muffrig, aslop grunifox…”

Star Wars was a tremendous movie. I'm really Han Solo trapped in a big spaceship. Thousands of stormtroopers dressed in choir robes are all around. Luke is duelling with Darth John Paul II. Princess Leia is—Oof! My ribs are inflamed with pain. What is going on? I was sleeping. My mother is giving me her “you're seventeen years old and you should know better than to sleep in church” look. Did that cute girl see me sleeping? No, she hasn’t looked my way yet.

I have to stand up again. I am reciting my profession of faith. I can't stand this prayer. Part of it goes “we believe in Jesus Christ, his only son.” How do I know that God has only one son? Jesus could have a brother hanging out somewhere. Heaven has to be a big place.

I get to sit down once again. This time the ushers bring the wicker baskets down the aisle and wave them in your face. They have money in them. I can't figure out whether they want me to take or give. If it was up to me, I'd take. But I don't think I'm up to another elbow to the ribs.

I see that another fine family has been selected to transfer the bread and the wine up to the altar from the back of church. I don’t understand why they don’t leave the stuff up front to begin with. I notice that an usher always carries up the cash basket. I think that they get twenty percent. The priest gets prepared. He washes his hands. There go the altar boys into the back room. I'll bet they are probably having a cigarette or drinking some altar wine. I know that I would be. There's no way that I could sit up on those seats next to the altar for the whole mass and be that close to the action without being on something.

The altar boys are back. The priest feels safe enough to break the bread now. This means that we have to stand.

“This is the body of our Lord, Jesus Christ.” The bells ring.

I pray some more now. Our father who art in haven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, just let me sit down again, my legs are tired.

“... let us offer each other a sign of Christ peace.”

Everyone is expected to shake hands now. People who are married are allowed to kiss each other, though.

Yeccch. Old lady handshakes turn my stomach. Thank you for the peanut butter-and-jelly-handshake Bobby. Peace be with you, Mom. Peace be with you. There’s a funny sight. A family of eleven is spread out along the entire pew and each one is trying to shake every other family member's hand. Now it’s time to kneel and pray.

The organist leads us in a song while we proceed up to the altar to receive communion. The ushers let us out of the pew in an orderly fashion. People in the front go first. I don’t understand why the ushers start out in the front at the same time, but are always out of sync in reaching the back. I mean, it’s the same distance for all of them.

We didn’t get any wine today. That’s a shame, because I was looking forward to having some. We have to kneel and pray until the priest talks again.

“Let us pray.”

He’s reading some philosophical crap about taking the word of God and applying it to our everyday lives. I’m sure he knows as well as I do that there are plenty of people here who cheat on their income tax, beat their
children, commit adultery, and sin in an infinite number of ways. It doesn't make any sense.

I'm singing the final song now. My family and I are exiting now. I'm surprised my mom didn't want to talk for an hour to someone.

I suppose I'll be back next week. Take care of yourself, God, and if you think of it, my physics grade could use some help.

George Dillard