

A Winter Story

That morning was cold, foggy and even dark. Steve got up early and walked to the closest parish before going back home. His old shoes were covered with snow, his face felt the dense wind of the season, and his eyes contemplated the beauty of the Creator in his creation. Steve's last years had been challenging—a time of grace and significant losses. Still, Steve's soul was full of gratitude to God for his grace!

He entered the old parish building of that small town and sat, as usual, before the tabernacle in which our Lord was reposed. That morning, while he was talking to Jesus present in the tabernacle, he felt a gentle breeze pervading him. It was joyful yet overwhelming; it was peaceful yet powerful; it was real yet unspeakable! *It was God's merciful gaze.* Steve's reaction was of a lost person with uncleaned lips like Isaiah (6:5). He, like Peter, fell down at Jesus' presence and said to him: "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8). However, he felt God's unconditional and welcoming love. God's self-disclosure also made Steve able to appreciate the richness of his true self.

It was cold outside the church, but Steve's soul was warmed by experiencing God's mercy—the donation of God's own Self to save him from sin and to lead him to a deeper communion with God. Steve understood that the Incarnation of the Son of God—God assuming humanity's misery and richness—and Jesus' teachings, deeds, sufferings, death, resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit were God's self-giving for him. He felt like the leper, the blind, the lame, the prostitute, the Roman centurion, and the tax collector from the Gospel. *He was able to understand his nature wounded by sin from God's perspective (full of hope) instead from his own (a sense of despair).*

Steve confirmed all he had learned since the "catechesis days:" God's gaze is also revealed in prayerful reading of the Bible, in the teachings of the Church, in the community of faith, in those most in need, and in the Sacraments—especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation—among ways. He was impelled to be reconciled with God and with his neighbors, which gave him peace and a sense of spiritual health.

That day, Steve came back home sharing his life changing experience with his wife and children: the experience of a gentle and overwhelming breeze before Jesus in the tabernacle. Steve experienced God's merciful gaze... have we?