

Life is best understood by looking back, but must be experienced going forward, to paraphrase Soren Kierkegaard.

There are places and moments where the distance between heaven and earth seems to vanish, and we're able to catch glimpses of eternity, or the transcendent or, as I once heard a writer refer to it: “The Infinite Whatever”.

The weird thing is, we don't even have to travel to find these places. Sometimes they seem to just appear when we're doing everyday things. I once discovered a “thin” place while riding on a crosstown bus. A couple of times it happened in a church. One spectacular time- at an intersection in traffic. And many times—outside.

The Celts say that heaven and earth are only three feet apart, but when we walk into a thin place—it's like being caught up in a moment—or maybe even caught *out of* time --a thin place does not necessarily lead us to instant spiritual wholeness or even something as spectacular as a “religious experience”-- whatever that means.

One thing I can say is that it can disorient you. Or even reorient you. It brings clarity – even if it's only for a few minutes.

We lose our bearings and find new ones. Or not. For a moment we break out of our old patterns of seeing the world and are given fresh eyes to take in new wonder.

So what exactly makes a place thin? I have no idea. This must be a mystery we haven't unraveled yet. I like to think that they are times and places where eternity just has to break in-- to remind us that we are part of something much bigger than our chronological lives.

Thin places are not necessarily tranquil places, or even a beautiful places---although they can be. They will probably be different for each of us, but for me, they make me stop. (And trust me, it's not easy to make me stop.)

And when am finally stopped, I am content. How many times are we truly CONTENT just where we are? And then I wait. I know something is coming. I know transformation is coming, and I will be unmasked.

I will no longer be the person I have always known, worried about the many, many things that surround me, I will become part of a bigger whole.

I've spoken with other people about their experience of thin places, and there experiences often vary greatly from mine. They have described it as being "zotted"—suddenly-- with insight. It's like blinders are being ripped from them. They are almost dazzled by the vision they see.

Sounds a bit like the Gospel this morning.

Jesus has come to see what his cousin is up to. He's heard about him baptizing people so they will feel clean, reborn, as if all the things they had done wrong in their lives were suddenly washed away. So one day—he decides to see it for himself.

I'm certain that it was an ordinary day. The sun was probably shining—since it's very sunny in the middle east—and he was probably a bit hot, dusty, and thirsty.

John is inspiring. He promises that if his listeners could see the kingdom that was coming—they would know that the way they currently saw life was limited for them--and limiting to others. If

they could just turn around and see life from a different perspective—repent—they would be on their way to a new life.

And Jesus? He was ready to reach for that unlimited life as he sank down into the water. And as he rose up again, breathless and dripping—he was unmasked.

There they were, he and John, in one of those mysterious times and places where the distance between heaven and earth seems to vanish, and they were deep in the Infinite Whatever.

Suddenly a bird is transformed into an image of Spirit, and Jesus appears to become part of the Eternity of God. He is illuminated, and his life, his ministry, is changed. And John sees it.

Thin places do that.

Ordinary times become touched with infinity as God touches us and awakens us. And no less a personage than Jesus of Nazareth told us it would happen to us— we will do what he has done—and more!

And the church celebrates this.

Now, I don’t know if you’ve noticed it, but the green liturgical seasons of Ordinary Time- in Epiphany and Pentecost are each bookended on each end by Sundays draped in white.

Epiphany comes between Jesus’ baptism and the feast of the Transfiguration, while Pentecost is sandwiched between the white of Easter and the feast of Christ the King.

All of these white seasons and Sundays represent moments of transformation, flashes of the “Infinite Whatever” amidst ordinary times. Amen.