

The Church Donkey

Christ the Redeemer Church
May 23, 2010
Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2: 1-21
Rev Gary L. Smith
www.christredeemerchurch.com

After giving a sermon last Sunday about being so happy that Daniel was moving out that I played Oldies but Goodies music loudly and refused to help him move (since I wanted him to have the *full* moving experience), some friends felt compelled to respond and come to Daniel's defense.

Marvin Cropsey from Tennessee wrote, "Give me Daniel's new address. I will adopt him." Shawn Kitchin wrote, "You are a mean dad."

Erika wrote from Dubai. She is a former Dutch teacher of Daniel's who now lives and teaches in Dubai and who is a peaceful and non-military Dutch person. She was telling of a recent conversation with a parent of a teenager in her class in Dubai. She surprisingly used strong military imagery. I had mentioned to her that my idea of a Family Field Trip, at times when they needed to be reminded of just how bad life could get for kids, was to take my own two kids to homeless shelters and police stations to show them hell on earth...shock effect parenting. Erika wrote back:

*"A lot of teenagers in Dubai are losing the war due to parents who are never home and who compensate this by giving their teenagers too much money. A parent asked me a few months ago what he could do to make his son more responsible toward his school work and improve his attitude toward his teachers. **I told him 'you are the general, your son is a foot soldier, your house must be run like the military; there are rules and consequences when rules are broken. There are rewards only when he excels.'** The father nodded and I knew he did not have the will power to do what I said. The boy failed grade 9 and now he fails grade 10. He drives a car without a license, is arrogant to his teachers and abusive to some of his peers. His family's name and wealth makes him believe that he is untouchable. He told me that he does not need a degree as he will inherit the father's business and fortune. I told him that an uneducated person may not be able to hold on to his wealth for a long time but of course such an arrogant young man does not believe me as I am in the end an immigrant worker who is paid to do the work the locals can not or do not want to do. His mother called me a week ago and begged me to promote her son to grade 11 so the boy would not lose face when he were to start at another school in September . Although I am afraid that this young man's family lost the war I really wanted to win a battle so I am sure you know the answer I gave her.*

It is extremely difficult to raise teenagers - I had no idea - and I can't wait to make it to the finish line in style I hope (and the finish line is still not in sight I am afraid) but your email gave me hope. If you can drive to a homeless shelter and to a police station we can't give up.

As I said before; it is time for a new book. It will be a best seller."

Wednesday night Daniel and I met at the city softball fields like we do every Wednesday night. To umpire city softball games as a father/son team on the field. It was a beautiful night, clear sky with the moon overhead. I love Wednesdays and umpiring with Daniel.

I daydream on such evenings...in between plays. I love baseball so much and so love just being on the field. I began to dream about what my life would be like had I ever made it in the major leagues and then began to dream about what life would have been if I had chosen to work professionally in some major league organization. Had I ever known when I was younger that you could actually make a living working in a baseball organization then that is what I would have chosen to do in life. I remember the first time I saw in a Public Relations brochure an organizational management chart of the staff for the Atlanta Braves. There were tens and tens of photos and job descriptions in that brochure. Amity and I were at Turner Field in Atlanta when I first saw that brochure. Since that day I have periodically wished I had known years ago that I could have had a career working IN a baseball organization.

Then Daniel the home ump called "Strike three. Batter is out" and I snapped back to reality and got my head back in the current game I was umpiring. Daniel made a good call. So much fun to watch him umpire games and manage disgruntled players and fans.

Amity is going to take us to see a minor league baseball game in Montgomery this summer when we visit her in Alabama. We talk baseball all the time. She loves going to games. I so love sitting with her at a game. She is a purist. She arrives early to the game and never, never leaves before the last out is made. You go for the whole game.

Pam says "You know Amity and Daniel love baseball just for you." I said, "I don't care why they love baseball, I just hope they keep going to games with me no matter why."

Friday I went to a restaurant here in town to buy some of their good rolls for dinner. The young manager-looking guy saw my AWANA shirt and commented on AWANA ministry. I told him I was a minister. He said, "Here are the rolls free of charge. Come back. Where is your church?" I told him where our church was located. Then he said, "Do you accept AGGIES?" I laughed and told him a Texas A&M Aggie is one of the founding members and leaders in our church. He said he was about to be transferred to here and that he needs to find a church. I said, "We need you. We are a church of doers. We need young guys like you to come and help out with the work that needs to be done in town." He promised me that our church would be the first church he visited.

Last night 22 members of our church sat together and enjoyed a most wonderful evening of singing, dancing, laughing, and bidding at the Women's Center Auction fund raiser. Over 600 people attended. It was a spectacular event held at the Embassy Suites Event Center. Our church by far had the largest attendance of any organization in two counties...we had two and one half tables in the VIP section by the dance floor. Nice.

Stephen Jones bid on and purchased a gift for his lovely wife Janice last night. Today is their 23rd Wedding Anniversary. Stephen bid on and bought Janice a live donkey and two bags of feed...food for the donkey, not Janice.

Janice wrote me late last night..."Gosh, I really would have been happy with that wildflower picture that I saw in the silent auction area. Steve said that he could paint me one. Yea....right!!! Happy fricking Anniversary to me. The appropriate gift for the 25th anniversary is Silver and Gold for the 50th. Apparently, a donkey is appropriate for the 23rd!!!"

After Stephen bought his donkey and had the entire room laughing over his purchase, we tried to get Stephen to leave our church table so no one would associate our church with a donkey.

One woman in the room commented, "I already have an a -s- s home, why would I want to **buy** one. I am trying to get rid of mine and Stephen is buying one. Why?"

After Stephen bought the donkey, folks started coming up to me and talking. One man said, "What time does your church service start?" I think he just wants to visit a church that buys donkeys for fun. I told him our church recently bought a pig also.

Pentecost Sunday. What is the language that we all speak no matter what our native tongue is and no matter what our denominational upbringing was? Love, forgiveness, generosity, grace, laughter, joy, fun, compassion for the weak, Trust, community, patience.

Carla had 7 different ladies spent the 7 nights with her in the hospital this week. Carla was never alone one night. Some of her colleagues said they did not know if they had anyone in their life that would stay with them if they were hospitalized.

Everybody needs a church family like this for weeks like this one.

I am glad I did not know when I was young that I could make a living in the front office of a major league baseball team. I would not be umpiring here on Wednesday nights and I would not be looking forward to attending a game this summer with my daughter. God knew how to get me to this day and this place.

Let's break some Bread and drink from the cup to be grateful. Best email this week was from Randy who wrote on Friday three simple words "We are Home." Welcome Home. Amen.