

Perhaps the difficulty of our time is to remember what is real. The assault on truth from fake news, while not new to our public discourse, certainly possesses a power and reach that we have not witnessed. Furthermore, the Down-the-Rabbit-Hole effect of real news castigated as fake news and duping people is deeply troubling. If nothing else, the need for an educated populace in a democracy has been underscored by our current conundrum regarding what is real and what is fake.

While the implications of this dilemma for politics and policy are unbelievably important and our calling as citizens as well as Christians is to be vigilant (Luther's distinction of the Two Kingdoms is helpful now as it was in the 16th century), I am drawn to a different consideration of remembering what is real. However, a case can be made that this different awareness possesses even greater import and engagement with what is real and what is fake. Stay with me.

The difficulty of remembering what is real was brought back to my attention while attending my niece's recent graduation from high school in St. Paul, Minnesota. It is not so much that you forgot the love of family and friends, the ease of returning to enriching conversations, or the simplicity of understanding from a look, a touch, a tease. Recollecting such things would surely bring them into awareness and consciousness. Yet, there is a power of presence that makes such remembering easier or, dare I say, more real. Thus, the issue, I suppose, is not so much remembering as it is awareness. We get so caught up in the rush of life that we, invariably, lose sight of what is always before us.

When the things that give life meaning and purpose, when the individuals who help us become the better versions of ourselves, when the connections that buoy us and strengthen us, when the idiosyncrasies that add spice to life and pepper humor into our experience, when we experience these realities more fully, we remember in a powerful way what is important and true. Therefore, our engagement with individuals and institutions, with work and play, rest and recreation is, in part, about structuring time so that we confront those things that help us remember who we are and how we are and why we are. When we lose sight of such markers, it is easy to drift and find ourselves disoriented.

Which is why I believe that the rhythm of life within the Church is not the only way to be, but it is a critical way of helping us remember. The texts that confront us weekly force us to remember what is important and what is extraneous. The Eucharist calls us to an awareness of the sheer gift of grace that envelops our life as well as the need that we have of such grace. The prayers are verbal signposts of the wonder of life as well as the all-too-present pain within life. The music draws us more deeply into reflection and feeling with its tenor and tone. The community with whom we gather exist as embodied reminders of the many and varied ways that God is expressed in life.

Ultimately, all of this leads, I hope, to an awareness of what I think Ryan Adams is singing about in the song for the link of the week. His *City Lights* is really about homecoming. Yet, the understanding he arrives at is that we are already there. The poignant verse underscores this:

If everything we are is true
Our memories are attics in those houses on the hill
Our love is there above us holding everything so still
And we are always here
Yes we are always here

Which, in a paradoxical way, is the truth. We are already here. We have already arrived. We are in the presence of the holy. In our seeking, we need to remember we are already present. While such an awareness may seem esoteric and detached from reality, I think that this understanding actually helps us engage more fully with the world. From this perspective, we engage the world in a different way. We encounter life resting in the heart of grace and love, recognizing that the realness of our life is always already caught up in the divine. From this perspective, I trust that our engagement with what is true and real and what is fake and false may not only be made clearer but is, indeed, made all the more urgent.