

## HIDDEN GEMS

by Jean Glaraton

*"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others,  
as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 1 Peter 4:10*

I've lived in my community for nearly three decades, yet in the past month I've discovered two hidden gems previously unknown to me. A secluded, peaceful park right here in the city with miles of hiking trails that seem Creator-designed for reflective walking toward inner peace. A quiet country road offering a shorter route than the busy, high-volume highway. Both came as welcome surprises in a life often spent getting from point A to point B and moving from task to task and event to event. There are plenty of magnet quotes—some more profound than others—related to this topic: "stop and smell the roses," "the days are long but the years are short," "we plan, God laughs," and my favorite, "I blinked and it was over."

God calls us to slow down and take notice. It's easy—and necessary at times—to fall into a pattern of daily life. Yet pattern does not have to mean complacency. There are hidden gems to be found not only around us, but within us. When we are in the unfamiliar, our senses are heightened, and we find ourselves more attentive to not only our surroundings, but how we are feeling inside. And it is often in those moments when we find the hidden gems within ourselves that we might not have otherwise allowed to be revealed to us. Doing the familiar leaves us with a sense of feeling grounded. What we discover when we step outside the familiar, outside our comfort zone, is that what we are grounded in are the gifts we hold within ourselves, and we are truly grounded in God. Wherever we go and however deep we choose to explore, we remain grounded in that sense of self, our faith, and our love of God.

The older I get, the more life reminds me that we really do only have this moment to count on. As our circle of people grows, we are more exposed to the uncertainty and even tragedy that is life and love. It's imperative that we seek out and take advantage of the hidden gems within ourselves and within our world.

*Reflect on a time when you found yourself in an unfamiliar place or situation.  
How did you feel? What did you gain?*

*What have you made available for others when you've dug deeper to uncover hidden gems within yourself?*

*Summer challenge: Find something you can do to interrupt your pattern or stretch beyond your comfort zone.  
Write about it in your journal or a blank notebook. Revisit it often. Reflect on how you change.*

**Creator God, maker of all things familiar and undiscovered, thank you for the hidden gems revealed to me as I travel through life. Remind me often to be grateful for the ones that bring joy and the ones that give me pause. Help me to seize each moment, to share my hidden gems, and to find joy in all. I pray in Your name. Amen.**

