



## Reflection from Bonnie Haghirian

A few weeks ago we celebrated the Feast of Epiphany, in the cold and ice. At that time, I gave my students an assignment entitled, "Matthew, Taylor and Me," to give them an opportunity to reflect on what an epiphany is, and how it can be a moment in time when the darkness clears and we can truly see. (I was also thinking it was pretty cool to have them work with Taylor Swift's song "Epiphany.") The assignment gave them a chance to read Matthew's Gospel, Taylor's lyrics, and then reflect on their own experience of an epiphany moment. I shared the story that I am writing to you now, as an example.

I have often called my personal little epiphanies "God moments," and that is what I would like to share with you.

After Christmas, I was in Alexandria, Kentucky, across the river from Cincinnati, with a friend of mine while visiting her and my sister. A trip to Meijer's is always part of the experience. We wandered the aisles looking at sales and seeing bare shelves and empty clothing racks due to the Christmas rush. We picked up a few things and went up to the register - the one with a real person, not a self checkout.

There was a woman ahead of us, and she was buying several cans of Skyline Chili. Several cans! You need to know that Cincinnati chili is a Greek cuisine, made with cinnamon and served on little hot dogs called coneys, with mounds of cheese on top. And you can buy it in cans and make it at home. Seeing the cans, I said to Joni, "Oh! That's what we haven't done - we haven't had chili and coneys!"

The lady in line laughed and asked if we were from Cincinnati. She said she had lived there in the past, she was in town for the holidays, and she was buying up those Cincinnati treats you can't get anywhere else. And then, she asked if we were from the area. Joni was raised in Kentucky, but I said I was from Kansas City. And now the lady told us her name was Kim. Kim told us that she was born in Blue Springs and grew up there so we had a bit of common territory. At that point, I told her that I live in Kansas City now, but grew up in Atchison, Kansas.

Most people haven't heard of Atchison, but some know it as the home of Amelia Earhart. Kim stopped and said, "Atchison? Have you heard of the Mount there?" I shared that I had gone to the Academy there, and that I go to the Mount to visit the Sisters from time to time.

By this time, the young woman cashier was getting excited as she overheard everything.

And then, Kim told me her story. Her mother had gone to Lillis High School in Kansas City, graduated in 1961, and felt called to religious life with the Benedictine Sisters in Atchison, immediately after graduation. She had been in the community for several years of formation, then decided she was called to marriage. So she left the Benedictines, fell in love, was married and had three daughters. Kim's mother died of cancer, far too young, in 1979, at the age of 39, while Kim was still very young.

Kim had always wanted to write a book about her mom, to share her story, but there were those "convent years" that she knew nothing about. She asked if I knew any of the Sisters at the Mount, but my mind was already in "Rolodex mode," thinking of the women I know in that Community who would be a few years older than me, who might have been in her mother's class. We exchanged phone numbers and I think, a hug. The young woman at the checkout said, "I just love it when God does things like this! God really does!" I promised Kim that I would work on finding information for her as soon as I got back home.

Within a few days, with the help of Sr. Molly Brockwell, several Sisters who had been in her mother's formation class had shared emails with Kim, and their memories of those wonderful years with her mom. Blue eyes, blonde hair, always a smile, a beautiful voice. And they remembered going to her Wake and Funeral and seeing little Kim and her sisters.

Kim was completely blissful with the exchanges. Last week, she texted me that she was traveling to Fort Leavenworth as part of her job with the military, and I told her that she would be only about 30 minutes from Mount St. Scholastica while in Leavenworth, and I encouraged her to meet the Sisters her mother had known. (They are truly an incredible group of women!)

So, about three weeks after the chili episode in Kentucky, Kim met and embraced her mother's friends in Atchison, Kansas and they had an evening of stories, laughter, memories and tears. And now Kim knows about those years of her mother's life and she is sharing them with her siblings and her children.

For me, this has become an epiphany moment, a God moment. It was a time when all of the heavens, the spinning of the earth on its axis, the aisles at Meijers and some cans of chili in Kentucky, all worked together to uncover stories of a mother taken too soon from her children.

When have you experienced a God moment? An epiphany?

Never go the self checkouts. Nothing happens there!

*Peace - Bonnie*