

## Forty days in the Wilderness

I was in a really bad mood that winter. In spite of my mood, on December 1, we cut down our Christmas tree at the tree farm up north, tied it to the top of the car, trimmed off its lower branches, decorated it and set it up in the living room. After Christmas, no one really wanted to take it down, so we didn't. Meanwhile, I'd decided to go on a 40-day fast. My logic was simple: The tree was still alive, soooo if God could keep the tree alive, he could keep me alive as well. (Like I said, I was in a really bad mood.) All that that winter, a mist surrounded the tree.

By the time that Easter's Holy Week came around, we decided that the tree had been up "long enough" and threw it away. It had stayed green for all that time and we came to call it our Miracle Tree. I too remained alive (and perhaps a bit green) and was asked to give a talk on Maundy Thursday about what it was like to "fast in the modern world". It was a beautiful spring morning and the light of it streamed through windows behind me as I stood in front of a group of elderly ladies from our parish. As I tried to capture their attention on a subject that I'd just spent the last 40 days researching, I realized that they weren't really listening.

They tried their best to be polite, but finally, I gave up and told them what I thought they really needed to hear: I told them how much they were loved...and that if I could find a way to show them how much God loved them, I thought it

might look like a huge cloud of snow passing before their eyes, a great storm of glittering whiteness made just for them to see.

Even with this heart-felt message, blank eyes only stared off into nothingness, seemingly oblivious to what I was trying to say. Finally, I declared our little get-together was at an end and left the room. Later that morning, one of the ladies came up to me and apologized for the way things had gone during “the talk” and asked if I knew why everyone just sat there staring and saying nothing? I said “no”, so she explained, “You had your back to the window, so you didn’t see it; but when you were telling us how much God loved us and what that love might look like, a huge white cloud of snow passed by outside the window behind you. For a second, it covered everything and, then, just as quickly, it was gone.

Needless to say, I was no longer in a bad mood.

After Easter, things got back to some semblance of normal. The sermon, as usual, was uninteresting. OK...so I’m not a particularly religious individual...Once again, the priest droned on and on without seeing that he’d lost his audience? (Sound familiar?) Couldn’t HE see what was all around him? Not snow this time! It was much too warm for that. Instead...

I saw a little angel reaching up to the lectern trying to get his attention? Personally, I wondered how he expected to give spiritual guidance to his “flock” if he couldn’t even see an in-your-face cherub!

I looked up and watched these angelic little ones riding on the overhead fans. They were everywhere, spinning around and having the greatest of fun. One even tried to balance on the back of a pew. Aaaaaah, and almost fell! Luckily, it caught itself just in the nick of time, its tiny wings waving frantically to maintain its balance. Whew! That was a close call! All smiles, these heavenly beings kept up their antics, while the people stoically tried to listen for the allotted 10 minutes of this, their weekly ordeal.

Suddenly, I shook my head as if to wake up! What was I doing? There weren’t any angels, I thought. It was just my imagination gone wild again...

“NO!” said a voice of Power. “What you are seeing is real!” Suddenly, I was taken up into Heaven and like a tiny baby, I was held seated on the lap of God and looking out at all the angels genuflecting before Him.

Like I said, I’m not a very religious soul, so my first thought was “Geez, you mean you have to put up with all this rigmarole even up here?”

Then God said, "ALL good things, even bright and beautiful thoughts come from Me! The cherubs are real."

Suddenly, I was back in the pew. The cherubs were still there playing, the priest was still droning on and on, and...but there on the pew beside me, a beautiful green branch from a Christmas tree suddenly appeared. So I picked it up, smiled at the cherubs that no one else seemed to see and took God's living reminder of miracles home.