

Excerpt from EIPHANIES (a memoir in progress)

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Toward the beginning of my first semester, senior year in college I had an especially significant spiritual experience. Since my time back at home as a child, I had continued praying every night. I carried that tradition with me even until college. Most nights I prayed out on the balcony, on the fire escape. On this one particular night I was praying, and I could smell the garbage from the large bins in the alley below, as well as hear the constant screech of sirens - ambulances, fire engines and police cars screaming down Broad Street, one block over from the dormitory residence.

As I spoke with God in prayer that night, those sirens spoke to me about the pain and misery in the urban environment and I found myself trying to comfort God, apologizing for all the bad things in the city and then suggesting to Him that if there was anything He needed me to help with, then "Just let me know." As I turned to go back inside, I heard a voice, from where I don't know - from

within or from outside of myself I don't know, but the voice said, "He helps those who help themselves." EIPHANY: I understood that God needed my help but it was necessary for me to figure out what it was he wanted me to do.

I felt that somehow in this search to find out what it was that I was supposed to do, I needed to attend church. Therefore, in the weeks that followed, I began to visit churches of all kinds. Like a spiritual gypsy, I visited first the Catholic Church (which was my root). Then I also visited Methodist and Unitarian churches and even a synagogue. Most of these visits were made with friends but the one to the Catholic Church was alone.

In the past I had always felt a special warmth in the Catholic Church when the "sign of Peace" was offered - when all the people for a moment let down their defenses and extended a hand, offered a smile and even sometimes embraced a stranger. So, as I ventured out for my Catholic experience, I looked forward to that moment, in hopes that God could reveal something to me about what I could do to help Him. However, for some reason, on that particular day the "sign of Peace" was not offered. As I reflect on it now, I feel that it was left out in order to tell me that it was not in a church that God meant to communicate with me.

I left the church that day feeling very empty, wondering where God was. As I walked home reflecting on what had happened, I absentmindedly smiled at a passerby who automatically smiled and greeted me in response, and there, at that moment, I heard a whisper from God saying, EIPHANY: "Here I am, not in a ceremony, nor in a church service; I'm here in the relationships among people."