

When the cross reappears

The olive-wood cross reminded me that Christ's sacrificial love is as close as the palm of my hand. Then I lost it.

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Last year around this time, I ordered a planner that greatly enhanced the ordering of my time.

[Sacred Ordinary Days](#) brought me into the rhythm of the liturgical year not only when I prepared a sermon but also in the seemingly mundane tasks of caring for home, body, and relationships.

When the weekly planner arrived, I was surprised to find in the package a "clinging cross." The olive-wood piece was a gift from the company and fit into the palm of my hand. Their intention was that holding the cross while planning my day would help me in centering on the presence of Christ in my life.

The cross became a part of my wardrobe. Wherever I went, so did the cross. I carried it in pockets, in purses, and, of course, in my hands. I would forget about it often during the day, but when my fingers or eyes would stumble upon it, I felt an immediate sense of calm. Earlier this year, when a beloved church member died unexpectedly, I held it constantly as people bombarded me with questions and I felt overwhelmed. I kept it on the pulpit as I delivered a homily at her funeral. I was truly clinging to the clinging cross.

A couple of months later, another funeral arose during the busiest part of Lent. I remember having the cross in my office, in my backpack, in my purse. But one morning soon after the funeral was over, I couldn't find it. I checked the pockets of the dress and robe I'd worn. I opened drawers and looked under sofas but found only

peppermint wrappers and stray dog hairs.

Though I missed having the cross in my hand, I trusted that it would reappear. I was not dependent on holding it, realizing that the practice pointed to something bigger. Holding it simply deepened my awareness that the sacrificial love of Jesus was as close as the palm of my hand—for me to receive for myself and to offer to others.

Weeks passed, and no cross appeared. I confess that I prayed one of those prayers that some of us avoid because they seem selfish: "Hey, God, yeah, I know you're busy with more important things, but uh ... I sure do miss that cross. I know I could buy another, but could you help me find this lost treasure?" Sometimes I think those prayers that we avoid are not selfish but rather reveal an ongoing need for God.

Months passed, and I only thought of the cross occasionally. When I did, I gave thanks that I had it when I needed it. I no longer asked for God to help me find it or to reveal its location.

This past weekend, as the temperatures cooled, I dipped into my fall wardrobe to find something to wear to a wedding rehearsal where I would officiate. I chose a dark purple dress with small, zippered pockets on the front and put it on.

I felt something inside one of the pockets. Before unzipping it, I already knew.

In the middle of my bedroom, I stood open-mouthed, as the clinging cross emerged from its cocoon into the light. The cross had disappeared last spring. I had not worn this dress since last fall.

God said to Moses, "I am who I am." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you.'"

— Exodus 3:14 (New Revised Standard Version)

Last Sunday's Old Testament text ushered us into the story of our deliverance with God appearing to Moses out of a burning bush. For many years to come, God would speak directly to Moses and appear to the Israelites in various ways as God led them into freedom. The burning bush began a journey where God was not always quite so visible—as hidden as a cross buried in a dress pocket.

Even when we wonder if God has disappeared, we can trust God to reappear.

Even when we don't have a tangible cross to which we can cling, the cross reappears in the hands we extend to one another. The cross reappears in the nail-pierced hand that orders our lives as we order our ordinary days.

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