

Ordinary Miracles happen all around.

You probably can't tell from this picture, but Barbra Streisand and I weren't always this chummy.

I mean, just think about it: the gigantic ego... the strident political views...the designer wardrobe... the manicured fingernails ... that unbelievable singing voice. Is it any wonder Barbra couldn't stand **ME**?



I'm not a big Streisand fan. But many years back I ran across a song of hers, entitled "Ordinary Miracles." It's a song composed by Marvin Hamlisch, written by Alan and Marilyn Bergman, and sung by Streisand. In other words – and I know this sounds like a great lead-in to a great joke – four Jews from New York have something very important to teach something to a church of Catholics in El Dorado Hills.

So what's a miracle?

Various definitions exist, but most seem to agree that a miracle is an event which the forces of nature—including the natural powers of man—cannot of themselves produce, and which must, therefore, be referred to a supernatural agency.

That's a fancy way of saying: God made it happen.

If we look at Scripture, we see no shortage of miracles.

God obviously was there in the Virgin Birth. And the Incarnation. And God was in Lazarus, dead for four days, rising. And in Jesus walking on water. Or multiplying the loaves and fish. Or healing people with just a touch of his cloak.

And on and on and on.

We believe in miracles, very simply, because we believe in God.

We don't doubt the Gospel account today of the Transfiguration – that moment when the Lord revealed to us just a glimpse of what Heaven is all about. We know it was one of God's miracles.

And we don't doubt my all-time favorite story in Scripture: the story of Joshua crossing the Jordan. I bet most of us aren't that familiar with this story – I know I wasn't until God pointed me to it one day 15 years ago. Joshua was charged with having the Israelites carry

the Ark of the Covenant across the Jordan River. But Joshua was no dummy. He knew that the Jordan was at flood stage, treacherous and swollen. He knew it would take a miracle to get across the river.

God told Joshua to step into the river and that all would be fine. Joshua, because he was as human as you and me, no doubt resisted. But Joshua also trusted God completely, and miracle of miracles, as soon as Joshua put his foot into the violent, raging Jordan River, the river dried up and the entire nation of Israel crossed over on dry land.

Now this story shows two things. First, sometimes God just asks you to step out in faith, even when you think he's asking you to step into a raging river.

But more importantly, God – this God who loves us so much, this God who IS love – is in the business of making miracles happen for his children.

Matthew Kelly says, 'Miracles are radical by their very nature and so we shouldn't be surprised they played a central role in Jesus' ministry. His miracles combined every aspect of his radical nature. They were simply an extension of who Jesus was.'

But radical isn't how most of us see life.

It's easy to get bogged down in the every-day-ness of life. School. Work. Laundry. Chauffeuring kids. Cooking. And then, finally, falling into bed, exhausted. Life seems to be just what we do to get from one day to the next.

But for others, life is banquet. It's full of opportunity, and wonder, and hope. For all of us, my hope is that life should be full of what Ms Streisand sang about: *ordinary miracles*.

Barbra understands that God doesn't ever step out for coffee. He is present every minute of each and every day. And Scripture is full of assurances of God's immediate involvement in everything from as small as the growth of a blade of grass to something as monumental as our eternal life with Him.

Yet God is present in and through the ordinary: flowers from our garden, shells from the beach, a juicy strawberry, a colorful butterfly, the key to the comfort of our home.



It's very much as Barbara's song says: these ordinary miracles from God don't come with a lightning bolt or clap of thunder. They come with joy and quiet wonder.

God's ordinary miracles for us are in every breath we take. The fact that we can touch and smell. They are in every cry of a newborn. Every morsel of food we eat. Every friend who holds our hand as we mourn a loved one. Every friend who walks with us in our illness.

Sadly though, for many – maybe even some here today— I know God can seem distant and remote. Perhaps you envision God removed from any direct involvement on a daily basis in your life.

But, I think the more you have an intimate friendship with Christ, the more you see God at work in the ordinary.

Years ago, I hired a young lady to be a receptionist; she possessed the cynicism that only a 23-year old is allowed to have. I remember she told me that as a teenager, she and her grandmother went shopping one day. As the grandmother drove around and around the parking lot looking for a space close to the store, my friend grew more irritated. She just wanted her grandmother to take any space and they could walk the few extra steps to the front door. But granny continued her pursuit, patiently waiting until a perfect spot opened right next to the store's entrance. "Thank you, Jesus!" exclaimed the grandmother. All my friend could muster – with an appropriate eye-roll, I'm sure – was "Jesus didn't provide that parking space. That's just crazy."

Whether or not Jesus provided the parking space or not really doesn't matter. In fact, it's nearly inconsequential to the story. What mattered is that the grandmother had a heart which believed that Jesus loved her so intimately and personally that He really would care about something as trivial and mundane as a parking space.

What mattered is that the grandmother had a grateful heart – one that sought out God in all things good, and one that proudly proclaimed her gratitude to God for even something as ordinary as a close-in parking space. She knew innately what Paul said in today's second reading: that God is "for us."

Grandma refused to see the ordinary in her life as just ordinary. Instead she saw the ordinary in her life as an **ordinary miracle** from God.

At Holy Trinity, we hold as a truth that stewardship – our grateful response to a generous God who showers us with ordinary miracles – is absolutely fundamental to our journey together as Christians.

We also realize that some – even in our own parish – challenge this. They detest this annual focus we have on stewardship. Worse yet, they think "stewardship" is just some thinly disguised attempt to steal more of your time and money.

For the skeptics – and really for all of us, as a reminder of why we will spend the next three

weeks focused on why it's so important we return our time, talent and treasure to the mission of our Lord's Church – let's turn to Mark's Gospel for the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. We all remember the story: a large crowd comes to see Jesus, and Jesus tells his disciples to feed them. The disciples explain that that's not possible because they only have five loaves and two fish. Scripture then says: "Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, Jesus said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over —twelve wicker baskets full."

Miracle? Absolutely, but what's really important is how Jesus responded in this miracle.

1. He looked to Heaven, and **acknowledged God** as the source of all goodness (in this case plain ol' bread and fish)
2. He said a **blessing of thanks**, expressing his gratitude to God for what had been given
3. He **shared what he had** with others, recognizing that all we have been given is given by God to be shared

Jesus was the original steward. If our purpose as a missionary disciple is to imitate Christ, he remains the example for us for us to this very day.

Over the next few weeks, we invite you to consider how God is calling you to live as a steward – and to make a formal commitment on the weekend of March 11. Everyone should have received a packet of materials in the mail – they are also available on our website or in the narthex.

But I don't want us to get ahead of ourselves. Commitment weekend isn't for two more weeks, and you need to some time to decide what your appropriate commitment might be.

In the meantime, after Mass, stop in the narthex and tell us on our display where you see ordinary miracles in your life. Some of our parish youth have already done this – stop by and see what they had to say.

And take one of our "Ordinary Miracles journals" with you from the people at the doors when you leave. Much like our gratitude journals last year, for 28 days, as a parish, we're going to actively look for God at work in our lives. We're going to look for where God is working his ordinary miracles. And importantly, we are going to look for how we can be ordinary miracles for others.

Today's first reading – the one about Abraham – really summarizes God's infinite love for all of us: remember, God tells Abraham "I will bless you abundantly and make your descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore." His message is the same for us.

Acknowledging that God blesses each of us abundantly – lavishly, extravagantly -- how will you fill these hands with your own ordinary miracles? Will you allow your miracles to help you rediscover Jesus? Will they enhance your friendship with Jesus Christ? Will they point you to Jesus who leads us to our compassionate God?

In the meantime, let God in, as we experience “Ordinary Miracles.”

