



A Sign From God

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Being born and raised Catholic, ever since I can remember I've been going to Church. And ever since I can remember, I find myself not paying attention at church. Instead, I just think about whatever comes to mind. Last fall it was buying a kayak. I would sit in Mass and think, man, it would be so cool to have a kayak—I could paddle in and out all of the little coastal inlets and creeks around my house.

Six months later, I still think about that kayak in church. That, and ninjas.

See, back in second grade in Sister Lillian's class, we'd go to church once a week with the school. It was a gothic-style church, and I passed the time thinking of ninjas rappelling down from the rafters. I'd have to fight them off, of course, saving the day, after which I figured Jennifer Harris would like me.

Not that she disliked me—it just seemed it would take me fighting off ninjas for her to even notice me. Unfortunately for my social life through high school, the ninjas never materialized. Luckily, I finally realized in college that you don't have to fight ninjas to get a girlfriend; you just need to talk to them because once you talk to ninjas, women are all over you.

In any case, Sister Lillian was a nun from the old school. She was a big old penguin of a lady who would tell us stories about the saints. The one story I remember is that of a mischievous boy who took the Eucharist out into the church cemetery. He'd been told that it was the actual body of Christ, so he wanted to see if it was true. Laying the Host on a tombstone, he took out his knife and cut into it, and the Host bled. A miracle apparently, after which the boy turned his life toward God and eventually became a saint.

Well hell, I'd probably wind up a saint if I had some sort of sign like that. But I've never had the guts to do anything like stabbing the Eucharist—I prefer to just chew and swallow my Jesus. So I often find myself talking to God during Mass, asking for some sort of sign, like for the crucifix to start crying or maybe the Eucharist levitating and then shooting out a brilliant white light in all directions.

I've had no such luck with those signs, but this past weekend, the second time I've been to church since I got married in December, I think maybe God gave me a sign.

I was sitting stage left of the altar. In the pew in front of me, there were three altar servers; the youngest was a girl around nine or ten. Her father was sitting right next to me, whispering to her when she needed to go up and hold the Bible for the priest and so forth.

Well, as usual I wasn't paying much attention. The Gospel was the story of Jesus giving the blind man sight, and I'd heard that one

before, so I was thinking about how easy it must have been to believe when Jesus was performing all those miracles. Once again I thought back to Sister Lillian's story of the boy cutting the Host. But then the homily moved on to how even though Jesus was performing all these miracles, not everyone believed in him. I'd already moved on to thinking about ninjas.

By the time we got to Communion, I guess part of the gospel and homily had registered in my subconscious. I was asking God for some kind of sign, nothing huge like the crucifix crying, but anything out of the ordinary, and I would believe.

As I was asking for some sort of sign, the priest was giving the Eucharist and wine to the Eucharistic ministers and altar servers. Then, as he turned back to the altar, there came a very loud noise. I thought the sound was a really loud fart, the kind where you might want to check your drawers afterwards. Then the two older altar servers moved away from the youngest. Oh that's funny, I thought. Poor kid. But I realized it wasn't a wet fart as she retched and vomited a second time.

Looking mortified, she left the altar with tears running down her face, and her father followed her into the altar server's room. But Mass continued as usual—the priest didn't miss a beat, and no one on the other side of the Church could have known anything had happened.

People went up for Communion. I went to the bathroom and got some paper towels. Jesus might have cleaned the puke up, but I was just going to give the paper towels to her father when he came out of the server's room. He eventually came out with his own paper towels and cleaned up. Then as Communion ended, the father and the girl came out. She had stopped crying, and at the end of Mass she carried one of the candles out in the procession.

So was that my sign? Is a kid puking on the altar a sign from God?

I hope so because I'd like to think God has a warped sense of humor. Answering a prayer for something out of the ordinary with a puke joke would be just right. Also, I don't think I'll have to become a saint with a sign like that.