

## February 17, 2019 - EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED!

I want to share with you a personal story that may surprise you. Be prepared for the unexpected.

It all began about a month ago on Sunday morning, January 13, the Feast Day of the Baptism of the Lord. It had been snowing heavily. Father Santiago and I were clearing the snow off my car. Fr. Santiago offered to help me take the snow off of the car roof. I said no, I did not want to be late to church.

When we arrived at the church, no one was yet there. I was proud that we were there right on time. I always say that snow, rain or shine, our daily and Sunday Masses are never cancelled.

I had the 8:30 am Mass that morning. Slowly, people began to arrive. When we started the Mass (on time), we had a total of 20 people. At the end of Mass, I mentioned that the 5 pm Mass the day before was packed, and I called those parishioners the “wise” ones. Many of them had decided to come on Saturday to avoid the snowstorm on Sunday morning. I called those who came in the snow that morning the “brave” ones.

The next evening, I had to pick up some medicine at CVS on Leonardtown Road. Just after leaving the drive-in window, I stopped the car. I had forgotten to put my wallet in my back pocket. I was in a dark area. I reached out to the light switch above the windshield. As soon as I pushed the button, I felt the sky falling on me... I was in total shock: I was covered by a mountain of snow... and ice! It took me three seconds to realize I pushed the wrong button; I had opened the sun roof! The unexpected had happened. I was totally humbled! How foolish I was!

I tried to close the sun roof, but it would not close. I was getting cold, not only because of all the ice and snow that had fallen on me, but also the open roof was bringing in the outside frigid air. I felt hopeless. I drove the car back home (10 minutes away). It got even colder with the air coming through the open roof. I stopped at the garage next to our church. Though it was after 6 pm, one of the mechanics was still there. He recognized me right away and called me "Father". That was a good sign. I was no longer hopeless. It took him only a few minutes to fix the sun roof. He simply scrapped the ice that had gone into the opening system. Praise the Lord! I then recalled the Gospel of the previous day: The Holy Spirit coming down on Jesus when John baptized him. We had a good laugh together when I told the mechanic that now I knew how Jesus felt when the sky became opened and the Holy Spirit fell all over him!!!

Every day, something happens to each of us that we do not expect. While we believe that we are totally in the hands of God, our Creator, sometimes we question: Why did this happen to me? What is the message that God is sending me? How can I learn from small events occurring in my daily life? How can I find the invisible hand of God in the unexpected?

I invite to you think about a totally unexpected event in your life, whether a small or big event, and try to learn from it. I already shared the above snow roof story with some of you and received some interesting reactions. This story could be called the parable of the “wise”, the “brave”, and the “foolish”. I am the foolish one. Of course, I should have cleaned the snow off my car roof. It can be dangerous when driving fast as the snow could have fallen off and blocked my vision ...resulting in a car accident and possible major injuries. The police could have stopped me and fined me (similar to DUI as one can hurt others). Another lesson is: do not buy a car with a sunroof if you are not going to use it. Finally, on the spiritual level, one can see in any event the Holy Spirit at work. One can interpret the snow as the grace of the Holy Spirit falling upon everyone, and the sun roof as the entrance door to our hearts. We should not be afraid to open the door of our hearts to the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Come Holy Spirit! Fill our hearts with the fire of your Love! Come Holy Spirit! Help us to trust in the everlasting Love and Mercy of God!

One in Christ,  
*Fr. Alain*