

One of my earliest memories

Granddad

Ice-cream - don't tell your Nannie

Nannie - ice-cream - don't tell your Granddad

I could never figure out why one didn't want me to tell the other

What was it about ice-cream?

This strange, delightful, smooth, sweet, lovely substance could change people in an instant, the first sight of it, just a lick, and adults were transported to a whole different place full of delight.

And why didn't they want me to talk about it?

Much later in life, the same kind of question would come up again, about something far more mysterious than ice-cream.

When I got to seminary, it was made clear to me in all sorts of ways that the powers that be did not want me or any of my class mates to talk about our encounters with the divine.

If we had had any direct encounters with God, or the Spirit, we got the message that we ought not to talk about those experiences.

What is it about Lutherans that makes us not want to talk about our encounters with the Divine?

If I, or any of my classmates at seminary, spoke of any direct contact with the Divine, we would have immediately been suspected of having delusions.

Oh, I'm not talking about feeling a sense of call, it was perfectly acceptable to talk about feeling or having a sense that God was trying to tell you something.

It was perfectly fine to talk about feeling a sense of call as long as you also made it clear that you had some doubts about whether or not it was God who was actually calling you.

I'm not sure if it was humility or fear, or our doubts that kept us from talking about the possibility of encounters with the One we were actually there to study, but we all kept mum, except for this one fellow, who claimed to actually hear God talking to him.

That guy was gone before the end of the first year.

Processed by the seminary and the synod, as unsuitable for ordination.

That guy served as an example to us all; if God shows up keep it to your self.

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not talking about faith, or believing in God, or feeling that God is somehow there; these things were expected of us.

I'm talking about indescribable, unexplainable, encounters with the Reality that lies at the heart of all that is.

I'm talking about mystical encounters with the Divine.

Claiming that we'd had a mystical experience was not the way to make a career for yourself in our Church.

So, I never spoke about my own mystical experiences.

**SMALL CHILD:** lying on the grass

**19 YEARS OLD:** At the Carlsberg Glyptotech in Copenhagen, standing in front of Van Gough's Saint Remey

During my clinical training, standing in a hospital room holding a still-born baby in my arms.

**SHORTLY AFTER COMPLETING SEMINARY:** Standing before the majesty of Niagara Falls, overwhelmed by the sheer force of the water and catching a glimpse of the Love that lies at the very heart of Reality in a the tiny teardrop that clung to my lover's cheek.

There are moments when we are exposed to the Mystery that we call God in ways that permeate our very being, words fall away and we know, know in every fiber of our being that we are in the presence of MYSTERY, beyond our ability to comprehend, or describe,

**FIRE, FIRE, CLOUDS, STARS,  
LIGHT, COLOURS, LOVE, TENDERNESS, FEAR, TEMBLING, WONDER, SILENCE,  
AWE,**

So, this is Pentecost and today of all days we should be able to at the very least, talk about those mystic moments when we have encountered the DIVINE.

So whether you call the MYSTERY God, or the Spirit, ....

**Invite the congregation to share their experiences of Mystery**

**Wrap-up:**

Nineteenth century philosopher, Rudolph Otto described the Reality that we encounter in these strange, indescribable moments as:

**Mysterium, tremendum et facinam**

**Mysterious, tremendous and fascinating.**

**Mysterious because there are no words to adequately describe or explain the encounter and we no not when or how we shall ever again have a similar experience.**

Tremendous because the experience causes us to tremble in fear at the awesome nature of the Reality we are encountering.

Fascinating because we simply cannot help but be drawn toward what ever it is that is happening; we want the encounter, we need it, we long to understand and explain it, it is simply overwhelming and it changes us in ways that take a lifetime to comprehend.

The Spirit blows where She wills.  
May each of you know the  
Mysterium, tremendum et facinam  
that is the ONE who  
lives, and breathes in, with,  
through, and beyond us,  
now and forever, Amen.