

ON ANY GIVEN TUESDAY...

... at this particular peculiar passionate university someone is asking *How can we prove there is the unimaginable force we call God?* and someone else, maybe a professor or a dorm rector or another student says, *Man, take a breath, isn't that a miracle?* or *See that sparrow, there's a miracle!* or something else just as direct and piercing.

And elsewhere on campus a small group of people are praying or singing, which are the same thing. And someone is fixing someone else's computer, which is service, which is prayer. And someone is explaining zygotes for the seventh time to a student who is *finally* getting the idea, and that patient explaining is sweet service, which is prayer. And of course there's a Mass, heck, there are probably four Masses running a relay on campus, one finishing just as another starts, and there is a girl, let's say, who is sitting astonished in the back of the chapel realizing o my gawd! This is a *meal*, this is *table talk* with a miracle in the middle! How ancient and simple and sweet!

And there is a film running somewhere, which is art, which is, when done attentively, prayer; and there is a basketball game, which is a form of celebration of the miracle of the body and the generosity of the creative spirit; and there are men and women cleaning toilets in the administrative and classroom buildings, which is among the very deepest forms of prayer, when you think about it, having to do with getting down on your knees before the Coherent Mercy, and serving other salty human miracles, and not being arrogant and cocky, and working to feed your children, who are the most miraculous of miracles, no question about *that*.

And there are classes, which are ways to open hearts and minds, and those are prayers. And there are couples kissing, which sometimes is the thrilling birth of love, which is prayer. And there are lanky young people studying, which is a form of work and meditation, which are forms of prayer.

And there is a president who stayed late in his office tonight to be absolutely *sure* he's ready for tomorrow, *huge* meeting tomorrow, last creative plans laid for the fundraising campaign and the new riverfront campus and the dedication of the new labs and the visit from the donor of immense resources, and he riffles through mountains of paper, and stares at a sea of electric scribbles in his computer, and marks up his talking points for the fifth time, and then he stands and stretches and reaches for the office lights and thinks if I hustle my bones I just have time to catch evening prayers in the chapel, but for an instant he pauses and smiles and thinks, boy, this is good work, this work *matters*, this work's about waking up kids, could you get any luckier in your work than that, what could possibly be cooler than that, I have the best job there is, wow...

-

*Brian Doyle, Editor*

*Portland Magazine, Summer 2009*