



Reflections on 'The Greater Things'

*"Amen, Amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do,
and will do greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."*

(John 14:12)

Take The Lead! By Jaci Phillips, PhD

I became ill in 2014 and had to move from Texas back to Erie. Before I got ill I was very athletic. I loved biking, swimming, and roller blading. Since 2014 I have not been physically able to do much of the intense sports I loved.

Have you ever seen Argentine Tango? Beautiful. Elegant. Soft yet strong. Intricate. Complex.

In late spring I started to try something I never imagined I could do... You guessed it... the Argentine Tango (AT)! Ha! While I loved the complex fluidity, I never dreamt of learning it. But I decided to try because it is slow and precise and I thought it might be something I could do that wasn't too taxing for me.

Seven months into this dance, while I have attempted to learn *it*, it has *taught me* things about myself. And God has spoken to me through this dance. So.... *Dance with me for a bit. :)*

In AT there are some steadfast rules. AT is *led* and I absolutely have to *follow*. Ummm... have you met me?? And following means that I have to hold back and *wait* to see what figure the leader is going to "invite" me to do. Again.... Have you met me?? So there I was in the beginning, anticipating instead of waiting, and dancing *ahead* of the lead *so many times* (You've met me, right??).

In the midst of learning this dance and trying not to anticipate or get ahead of the lead (my very patient instructor, Jim), I heard God say to me... "This is what I want you to let *Me* do also.... Let *Me* lead you..." whoa. I *thought* I was! I have definite strength, which is not a bad thing at all. But just like in AT, my strength works best when I *allow* God to take the lead. AT will not work unless a skilled follower allows her strength to be *guided and directed* by the lead. Just like in faith, we are not forced to follow. It has to be our will and desire to go along with another plan.

AT is not enjoyable for the follower if she's dancing around the floor with a lead who is too aggressive or impatient or doesn't trust that she can pick up on subtle 'invitations' to follow rather than ones that scream. Generally, this is *not* how God leads us. However, in AT and in faith, *soft cues* won't be enough unless I am really paying attention to the lead's (and God's) subtle cues (like the '*still small voice*') and am willing to invest the time to get to *know* his cues and *the steps* well enough to *be able* to follow them. It takes effort.

This isn't an easy dance and I am not what you would consider to me *Dancing With The Stars* material. As I am learning the figures, each new one feels clumsy and haphazard, and I have to depend on my instructor to point out *why* it feels that way and *how* to start fixing it. I am completely unable to fix it on my own! It's the same with our spiritual walk. Regardless of what God uses in our lives to teach us, we all need practice in allowing the wisdom of God to point out what we need to change while cooperating with the grace of the Holy Spirit to be able to accomplish it. It's a *spiritual* tango where we are always a little off balance until we learn the next step in following Him better.

In AT, it's often the female follower that everyone is watching as she does sweeping leg movements, leaning body movements, fancy kicks,

etc. It is truly beautiful to watch. But in reality, these movements can only be properly executed when the lead is doing his own set of complex movements, footwork, and shifting of body weight to create a beautiful picture frame for the female follower to 'show off' her graceful strengths (yes Lord, You *knew* I would love this). The lead is the one *who creates* the possibility and gives the subtle "invitation" for the follower to perform moves that the lead knows she is particularly good at or enjoys.

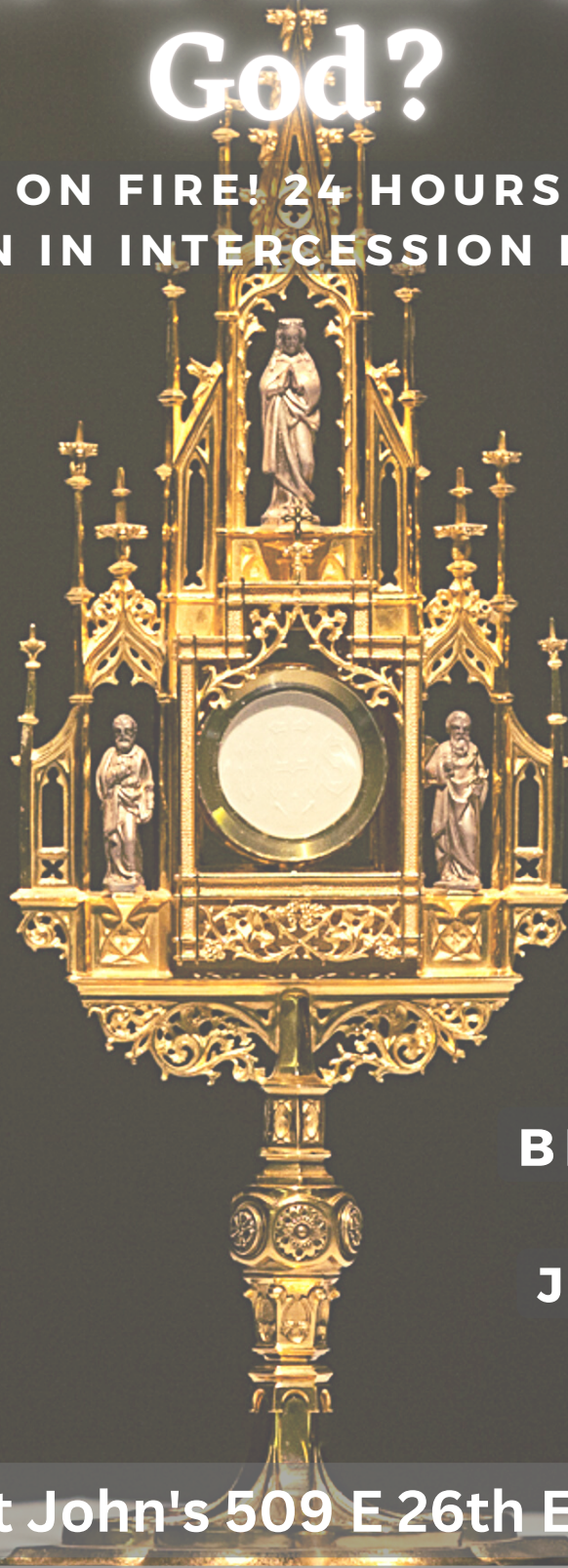
In AT, the follower is almost always moving backwards. She cannot see where the lead is taking her. She just has to *trust*. The lead is taking many things into account as he directs the moves and direction. *Is there another couple too close to us to right now to safely do something with a nice fancy little kick? Ok. For now let's just keep doing a tango walk...* For the follower it might seem like too much plainness, but it is avoiding real physical dangers in this dance... like catching the full force of a stiletto heel in your calf! More spiritual implications, right? "*Lord... can we please hurry up and get to the fun part that I'm good at rather than all of this walking around in circles?? It feels like we've been doing this for like... 40 years!! What's that You are saying? Oh. You see things in the way that I can't see. Ok. I'll just keep walking.*"

Continued on page 4



Who Is Like Unto God?

FAITH ON FIRE! 24 HOURS OF
ADORATION IN INTERCESSION FOR 2023



**EXPOSITION
FRIDAY
JANUARY
20TH, 10AM**

**BENEDICTION
SATURDAY
JANUARY 21ST
9AM**

St John's 509 E 26th Erie

Worship - Mass - Rosary - Prayer - Sung Chaplet

**10:30PM Worship Concert by Harmony's House
with Midnight Eucharistic Procession with
Fr Joe Petrone**

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

Breaking Bread on Christmas Eve

My childhood Christmas traditions are treasures that I draw out and celebrate each year. One special one is OPLATKI. My father's family were Polish immigrants, and the Oplatki originated in their home country during early Christian times. Simple wafers are used, made from flour and water, similar to communion wafers; but they are bigger, rectangular shaped, about 3" by 6" and are stamped with beautiful Christmas images, especially the of the Holy Family.

The Oplatki is a ritual that begins the Christmas Eve meal, with the whole family gathered around the table. Usually the eldest member of the family begins by breaking off a piece of Oplatki and passing it to another family member or breaking the wafer into enough pieces for all and then passing them around the table. This is accompanied by a blessing or prayer. Then the other family members do the same. It is an intimate way to express love and best wishes for the coming year to each person present.

It is believed that this practice was initiated to shadow the Catholic Eucharistic meal and this idea is supported by the fact that the name of the birth place of Jesus, Bethlehem, actually means *House of Bread*.

While this has always been a family tradition, I was especially blessed a few years ago when I opened a Christmas card from a special elderly friend, a kind and gentle Polish lady. Dorothy was the mother of my sister-in-law and we had often enjoyed conversations about our families and shared customs. As I opened the card, a small piece of Oplatki fell out. Then I read her note. *"I hope you are ok with me sending this thru the mail"* she explained. *"Now that I cannot get out, I decided to reach out with our shared tradition and offer Oplatki blessings for the New Year for you and your family."* I called her as soon as I could adequately hold back my tears. I still have that little piece of Dorothy's Oplatki. She is now with the Lord and I pray for her and treasure the special blessing she was in my life and the tiny piece of wafer that reminds me of her.

Traditions are important. I pray that all who read this newsletter have a blessed Christmas, celebrating the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ, and enjoying time and family traditions with your loved ones.

Blessed Christmas to you from Faith On Fire! CCRC



So, when I run ahead of the Lord, it's what they call in tango... "a bad dance." It's not pretty at all. It looks like the follower is competing with the lead. And just like in AT, I am all out of sync with the One who can see the bigger picture and all the obstacles I am about to crash into because I am oblivious; the One who knows all of my gifts (and gave them to me); the One who loves it when there is an opening for Him to do all of the complex moves that I don't see so He can create the perfect space and supporting frame to allow me to... *shine*.

It is such a good lesson for faith. God is the one who created me (you too). He knows what my (our) strengths are and what I am capable of even better than I do (Yep. You too). When He is urging me to do something new, something uncomfortable, something hard... He is pleased with my little steps of progress, even though I'm still in the stumbling around off-balance stage.

This dance is teaching me deeper dimensions of His love. It's teaching me that the Lord *delights* in me and I know this not just on a mind level, but on a heart level. Lately I have been asking... "Is this really true? Is this how You are? Do You see my gifts and the beautiful and complex way You created me and smile when I try to do something spiritually beautiful?" And I hear the answer.... "Yes. That is Me." Wow. That one gets me in the heart.

Lately I am aware of Him patiently waiting to lead me when I am powering ahead and taking the lead myself... because I say I trust Him, *but not completely*... In this new little adventure in tango and in faith, I am finding that it is more peaceful to wait on Him to show me where to go and let Him lead. Interestingly, just like in AT, I had no awareness that I wasn't really allowing this enough until the Holy Spirit (the best 'LEAD') used a beautiful, complex dance and an amazing instructor to bring it to my attention.

Jim often tells me to 'stop thinking' while I am dancing and *just relax and follow*. He **OBVIOUSLY** doesn't know me... (*just sayin'*...). But a lot of wisdom in *that* statement...! And **REALLY** *difficult* for me (you may be better at it). I am a *world-class* over-thinker. It is why the field of neuropsychology suits me. It is why I love to teach. It is why I can listen to a piece of music and hear every single harmony, instrument, interpretation, and every part of the mix. It is why I was able to build and run divisions in hospitals. It is why I can look at a room and see all of the interior design possibilities down to area rugs and the way books

are placed on a bookshelf. It is why in younger years I could teach a horse to tango (a.k.a. dressage). These are gifts. But my gifts (and yours) have a proper time and place. Just like in AT, at the right moment, God *creates the space* to let these gifts shine and be used. And just like Jim... He also uses **me (and you)** to create a space for **someone else** to shine. WOW.

As I improve in AT and I am not so focused on the myriad of little things I need to do I am able to recognize and appreciate all of the fancy things that Jim is doing to set everything up. I can see that he is adding his own 'embellishments' in a way that doesn't demand attention, yet adds to the overall beauty. This dance would not be possible, or beautiful, or nearly as good unless he was not only an expert at doing his part, but doing his part so steadily *while teaching me* to do my part! Double duty! Another God analogy... While God is expertly doing His part, He teaches us how to do ours when we give Him the opportunity to teach us a few new steps - even if we feel a little off balance at first.

Just as in Tango, there are always new steps to learn and higher and more beautiful spiritual virtues to aspire to in our spiritual tango walk with Him as we *let Him*... **TAKE THE LEAD**. I pray your journey has a lot of 'good dances' with the Lord! Thanks for dancing with me. :)

"Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit **lead me on level ground!**" PS 143:10, ESV. [emphasis added].



In Honor of Our Lady

First Saturday Mass

Celebrant – Fr Jerry Priscaro

Soloist – Jaci Phillips – Organist – Corey Spacht

St Greg's Northeast

Prelude: 8:50, Mass 9am

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BY THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY By Jaci Phillips

Jesus Still Performs Miracles EVERYDAY!

A couple of months ago I went on a road trip with some friends to see one of my favorite on-fire Protestant speakers... Heidi Baker. She is kind of like a combination of Mother Theresa and St. Paul. She left a life of ballet and luxury when she got saved in order to serve the poorest of the poor in Mozambique. She had been stoned, beaten, shipwrecked, put in jail, and a lot of other things. But she also has seen food multiply to feed hundreds or even thousands; she prays for blind people with no irises and, in creative miracles, they grow them and can see; and has commanded poisonous snakes to crawl into a pit, which they did, and died there... and so much more. I was so excited that she was only a few hours away.

Two people in our group were beautiful Spirit-filled Protestants from Grove City. We had just met the woman who travelled with us. We were all excited and had a strong connection in the Holy Spirit.

This testimony is our story, but especially Stacia's story. She has given me permission to share it and I hope it builds your faith.

As we talked in the car, Stacia told us that she was "the woman with the issue of blood." She had been bleeding for 15 years and she was desperate for healing. Many people had prayed for her for healing. Stacia had a prophetic dream that she would be healed on this trip after she "met a Catholic girl."

Stacia's issue was so bad that she feared she would have to ask us to stop every 30 minutes on our drive. As we all listened, we all felt so bad for all she had dealt with.

Being a car full of charismatics we did what we knew to do... WE PRAYED! We all laid hands on Stacia and earnestly prayed for her to be completely healed. As we prayed we felt heat in our hands and Stacia felt it too. We did not have to stop even one time on our drive.

That night, Stacia told me that she had "almost no blood at all." We thanked God and asked Him to complete the healing. The next morning.... "No blood at all!" PRAISE GOD! We just kept praying and believing. Our trip was

short, but on the day at the conference and drive home there was also no bleeding.

Stacia and I continued to text occasionally. Each time she was rejoicing and so happy because she was still not bleeding. When I talked to her last weekend on the phone, she was just overjoyed because, in almost 2 months... SHE HAS HAD NO ABNORMAL BLEEDING!

I thank God for healing this amazing sister in the Lord who was just like the woman in the Bible with the issue with blood. She had seen doctor after doctor. She had been prayed over. Nothing had helped her and her bleeding severely limited her. But Stacia had great faith and God had a plan and a planned time for her healing. That trip was her appointed moment to reach out in faith and touch the hem of Jesus' garment.

And a woman who had [suffered from] a hemorrhage for twelve years [and had spent all her money on physicians], and could not be healed by anyone, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His outer robe, and immediately her bleeding stopped. Jesus said, "Who touched Me?" While they all were denying it, Peter [and those who were with him] said, "Master, the people are crowding and pushing against You!" But Jesus said, "Someone did touch Me, because I was aware that power [to heal] had gone out of Me." When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came up trembling and fell down before Him. She declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith [your personal trust and confidence in Me] has made you well. Go in peace (untroubled, undisturbed well-being). Luke 8:43-48, AMP



upcoming events

First Saturday Mass
In honor of Our Lady
9:00 AM at St. Gregory's, Northeast, PA
Sacred Music beginning at 8:50 AM
Soloist, Jacqueline Phillip - Organist Corey Spacht
Celebrant: Rev. Jerry Priscaro

Praise and Adoration Holy Hour
First Monday's
6:30 - 7:30 PM at St. Agatha-Epiphany of the
Lord Parish
353 Pine, Street, Meadville PA
Worship Team - Harmony's House
++++++
AND Saint Francis Xavier Church 8-9pm
Thursdays (Except First)
8880 Main St. McKean Pa

WHO IS LIKE UNTO GOD?
24 Hours of ADORATION and
INTERCESSION for 2023

Friday January 20th 10am to
Saturday January 21st at 9am.

Adoration Worship Concert 10:30 PM Eu-
charistic Procession at midnight
St John's, 509 East 26th, Erie

***So many reasons to worship
and pray. Please plan on
spending some time with the
Lord during this event.***

Jesus, Son of God, in whom the fullness of the Divinity dwells, You call all the baptized to "put out into the deep," taking the path that leads to holiness. Waken in the hearts of young people the desire to be witnesses in the world of today to the power of your love. Fill them with your Spirit of fortitude and prudence, so that they may be able to discover the full truth about themselves and their own vocation. Our Savior, sent by the Father to reveal His merciful love, give to your Church the gift of young people who are ready to put out into the deep, to be the sign among their brothers of Your presence which renews and saves. Holy Virgin, Mother of the Redeemer, sure guide on the way towards God and towards neighbor, You who pondered his word in the depth of your heart, sustain with your motherly intercession our families and our ecclesial communities, so that they may help adolescents and young people to answer generously the call of the Lord. Amen.

You Can Help Make a Difference

Faith On Fire! is *completely* dependent upon your donations to spread the fire of the Holy Spirit in the Diocese of Erie. Your donation, no matter how much, makes a big difference!

Contributions can be made by check, text, Tithe.ly app, and on the website.



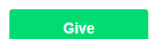
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St. Mark Catholic Center
429 E. Grandview Blvd
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The office is generally open limited hours.
Please call before coming.

The purpose of this newsletter is to proclaim
the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to provide
teaching, news, and calendar of events, which
help to foster Catholic Charismatic Renewal
throughout the Diocese of Erie.

This newsletter may be copied to put in
churches or shared with others.

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