

God, Life and Everything "Bat Out of the Belfry"

How was your Easter?

Mine was batty.

Literally.

I think it all started the night before Easter at our Easter Vigil. We begin the service outside after the sun goes down, and build a fire. Then, after some prayers, we file into the church following the Paschal candle. All very moving.

Only, I think it was that dusky evening, with the church door wide open and the only light inside coming from candle, that a visitor slipped in with us.

Nobody noticed a thing all that night. But the next morning at our 8:00 AM service, things got lively. We don't normally have organ music at the early service, but it was Easter, and that deserves a little pomp and circumstance even for the quiet crowd.

Even with the organ, it was not until the halfway point in the service that our visitor made its presence known. The prayer leader was just listing all those in the parish we were praying for when she stopped short. I looked at her, and she was looking up. I glanced over at the congregation, and they were mesmerized by something near the ceiling as well. I looked up.

There it was, fifteen or so feet above flying in a perfect figure eight pattern from one end of the church to the other, over and over. The prayer leader bravely forged ahead, one eye on the prayer list, the other up above. "We pray for ... the mission ... of ..." Then she ducked. The congregation sucked in its collective breath because the bat flying around our church had flown a little too close to her head.

It is not true that bats get tangled in your hair, and they are not aggressive animals, but there is still a certain creepy factor. Nevertheless, our prayer leader finished in good order, and we moved to the passing of the peace and announcements.

At the Peace, three parishioners excused themselves because of a severe fear of bats. As they left, the bat visitor continued its figure eight flight, every now and then stopping to rest in a stained glass window.

We talked about the bat during the announcements, and you know what? The discussion centered around how important bats are to our world. Nobody wanted it inside, but nobody wanted it hurt, either. There were a few attempts to herd the frightened animal outside, but it was too quick.

Still, we could tell it was getting tired. With each lap around the church, the bat got lower and lower. Eventually, it was so low, that everyone had to duck as it flew by. From my vantage point, it was a sea of bobbing heads. Still, they steadfastly celebrated the resurrection.

Eventually, as we stood outside shaking hands after the service, the bat found its way out the door - which we quickly shut!

Nice story, but the next day it got better. A parishioner who had been there e-mailed me to say she loved the bat, and that in Native American symbology the bat represents rebirth and fresh starts. So, the way I figure it, that bat was a messenger of the resurrection!

So, let others have their bunnies. We got an Easter Bat!