

Every morning, I sit in bed with a cup of coffee.

And I spend up to ten minutes looking at a picture on the wall at the end of the bed.

It is a landscape of Georgian Bay, with on the left side, the Escarpment.

On the right side it is mostly huge cloud formations over the water.

It is by Elizabeth Tasker, a local painter who died a few years ago in her nineties.

Elizabeth was a very convinced atheist.

We knew her reasonably well, and each Sunday afternoon, after church in Lion's Head, we would drop into her Isthmus Bay house for a half hour visit and a small dry sherry.

She would always, after the drinks were in hand, turn to me and say, "Well, Lorne, what was the sermon about?"

The first time she did this, I said, "Elizabeth, I am an Anglican. I don't go to church for the sermon. I go for the Eucharist. The sermon is a long stop on the milk run to my preferred destination, the Elevation of the Host."

She grimaced and told me I had to do better.

And so...Fr. Brad's sermons and then those of Fr. Chad, along with the ones given by our lay readers, I would recount to Elizabeth.

And she would comment on them critically (of course!), and we would have a friendly argument, as I defended the words of my priests.

At the end of each argument, she would tell me I was hopeless, a bit feeble minded.

And I would quote St Paul on the Greeks, and she would laugh.

But...I realized that she looked forward to these ten- or fifteen-minute sermon discussions each Sunday.

She maintained her staunch atheism, but she was pleased over a little sherry to listen to my "comfortable words", relayed from Christ Church.

And I listened and learned to remember the sermons I heard in that church.

Thanks be to God for sermons and for nonbelievers who are interested in them

Lorne Ellaschuk