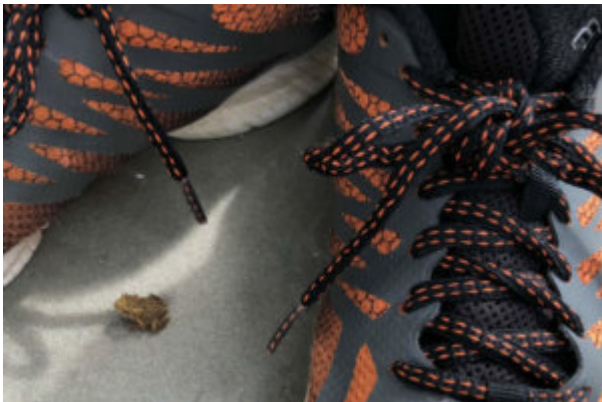


Making a tiny discovery at the Shrine of St. Anthony

We don't visit the Shrine of St. Anthony in Ellicott City as often as I would like. It's such a serene place, full of natural beauty, with warm and welcoming people.

So I was thrilled to have an excuse to visit yesterday. We met two of my friends to plan an event there for later this fall. We brought our children—nine altogether—and they played with a sitter while we met and looked at the space and discussed how our group would enjoy our time there.

Then it was time to go. As we were walking to our cars, our children were running ahead—the way children do. And we saw them stop to look at what seemed to be a brown leaf floating across the sidewalk.



But it wasn't a leaf. It was a tiny frog or toad. I've never seen one so small, and neither had the children, who were absolutely delighted.

We stopped and focused entirely on this little animal. The children tried to catch it or corral it so they could look at it more closely. But of course they couldn't. And the little creature hopped back into the grass and disappeared.

Here we were, surrounded by the beauty of the shrine, a place that draws visitors from everywhere, and our entire focus was on this teeny little life in front of us. It was smaller than a walnut, so tiny that we might not have noticed it if the children hadn't seen it with their sharp eyes, love of exploration, and endless curiosity.

The large, beautiful structures and statues around us were momentarily forgotten. The blue summer sky and the green of the trees and lawns were merely a backdrop

to this little life. All our eyes were on this little frog or toad as it leapt around the sidewalk and finally disappeared into the grass.

In fact, a woman carrying a toddler approached me to ask for directions to the chapel, and I told her, but then I said, “We’re all just so excited about this little toad the children found on the sidewalk.”

But by the time I turned back toward the children, our little friend had hopped back into the grass, back into nature, back to a place where he was safe from eager children’s hands and toes.



Hours later, though, we were still talking about that little frog or toad. How wonderful that God sent us not just the extraordinary beauty of a summer day, but also a tiny creature to delight the children who had been trying to wait patiently for their mothers to finish their boring grown-up conversation.

God’s gifts come in all shapes and sizes.