

The clear side of the windshield

Normally, my family walks the two straight blocks it takes to get to Mass, but with an icy street and frigid temperatures, Patrick decided we should drive. Loading the kids into their respective car seats takes at least five minutes (longer than our actual walk), so by the time everyone was loaded up into my SUV, we were running late. Of course, the windshield was also covered in ice, so Patrick had to go back outside to chop through the extra layer on top of the glass using our trusty Baltimore Ravens scraper. For the sake of time, he only scraped off his half of the windshield. He could see in all directions through the portion he scraped, along with the clear rear and side windows. My side of the windshield was a blur of color.



Image via Flickr Creative Commons/Michael Sheehan

It made me nervous. I wanted to know what was out there, even though I knew that at this point it might be a car or two, traveling at maybe ten miles an hour. Possibly one or two people crossing the street. A squirrel or two. Every few feet, I'd check the side window to see what we had passed.

But what if a car came flying towards us because its driver was texting or a child chased a ball into the street (though no sane parent would allow their child to play outside on a day like this)? It was a pretty dramatic prospect for such a short drive, but if something like that happened, I wanted to know beforehand. I wanted to see it coming.

A light began to flash to my right, just about where I expected our parish to be based on the brown blob spreading across my windshield. It looked as though a beacon had been mounted on the side of the building.

"What's that light?" I asked Patrick.

"A salt truck," he said.

As we passed the side street next to our church, I saw the salt truck outside of my window, hulking beside a little car, hogging up the road, waiting for us to pass so that it could spread some salt and keep us safe.

Patrick pulled right into a spot up front (I always think of those as God's little rewards for us) and we unloaded the kids, shuffling tiny steps into a Mass that had begun without us. On a day like that, all that mattered was that we arrived safely.

During Mass, I reflected upon my experience being a passenger unable to see.

I realized that just like the song, "Jesus Take the Wheel," there are times when we cannot be in the driver's seat, literally and figuratively. We should not only accept, but embrace this fact.

Patrick, being a lifelong farmer, is a lot more experienced at driving in adverse conditions than I am. About ten years ago, I hit a patch of black ice and ran into a tree. I get overwhelmed in similar road conditions. Even though my vehicle has 4-wheel drive, I still panic when I start to skid and usually end up slamming, rather than pumping the brakes, like Patrick taught me. Patrick's instincts are to stay calm and apply the appropriate driving strategy (even if it means only clearing off enough windshield for him to see, leaving me in the dark). But, I trust him with my life, every day, but especially when he's in the driver's seat.

Whether we're unsure of our ability to drive, or even if we're distressed about something, it's better to have someone else take the wheel and get us there safe.

This is difficult for most people, myself included, to accept at one time or another (or all the time). We want to know what to expect by taking in the horizon. We get frustrated when the windshield isn't clear on our side. It's our car, isn't it? Why can't we drive?

Our life is our vehicle. And we can't drive because God gets the clear half of the windshield. Though our side is blurry, we can still make out the shape of some of the sights ahead, like how I recognized my church through my occluded view -on the literal end, or how as a young girl I saw myself being a writer and having a husband and children someday -on the figurative end. When we stop dwelling on details and focus on the light, as I did with the salt truck and I do with Jesus Christ, we can be saved.

And so, we should trust God to determine the route our life will take. God will steer us clear of obstacles if we listen to His word and obey His orders. We must remain beside him, no matter what happens during the ride. If we do these things, our journey will continue in heaven.