



Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Idling at a red light around Christmastime, I glanced over at the car in the next lane. The driver was male and kind of scary looking---you know, a different race from mine, dressed differently from the guys I know, and a bit out of place in our neighborhood. He was listening to loud music (which is probably what brought him to my attention). And he was driving a really cute red car.

I hit the button and the window rolled down. I motioned to him that I wanted to say something to him. Immediately on the defensive, he looked a little uncertain, but he turned down his music and waited for me to speak.

“What a darling car!” I said, smiling. “I just love the color.” Everything changed at that moment. He gave me a smile that revealed the delighted young man he was, thrilled that a stranger had noticed his great treasure.

His smile, so pure, so gentle, could have melted the ice on the street. “Oh, thank you! That’s so nice! I really like it.” The light changed, we both set off, and he was still waving and smiling at me when I turned off half a block later.

Don’t you love those encounters with people who don’t look like you do? That little exchange changed everything for me the rest of the day, and weeks later I’m writing about it now.

I begin to see, said the Orthodox Jew Peter to the Gentile centurion Cornelius, *that God shows no partiality*. That was a huge moment in the history of the Church. Gentiles and Jews, once so estranged, started recognizing and waving at each other.

How will you embrace those who don’t look like you this year?