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Leap of Faith

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Leap of Faith
A play for actors and singers by John Steven Paul
Developed in workshop by Soul Purpose,
The Liturgical Drama Troupe of the Valparaiso University Theatre

Characters:

Sondra
Peter
Judith
James

In the chapel. SONDRA is rehearsing with PETER on the second reading for the service the next morning.

SONDRA:

Can you just read the last two verses again?

PETER:

From where chapter four starts?

SONDRA:

Yeah. Be careful about the final consonants.

PETER:

(raising an eyebrow at her) Right.

“Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God’s word; but by open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.”

How was that?

SONDRA:

You’re still reading pretty fast.

PETER:

I'll slow down tomorrow, okay?

SONDRA:

Okay.

PETER:

(picking up his things) Oh, man, I can't wait for next Sunday.

SONDRA:

Yeah, Spring Break! Home in the bosoms of our families.

PETER:

No, not that. I'm not going to be home.

SONDRA:

(guessing) The, uh, first Sunday of Lent?

PETER:

No, definitely not that.

SONDRA:

(SONDRA notices this response, but goes on) What then?

PETER:

Leap Day.

SONDRA:

What?

PETER:

Leap Day. February 29. My birthday.

SONDRA:

Wait a minute; your birthday is February 28, isn't it?

PETER:

"Observed." Nope, my birthday's February 29th. This year, I'll be five years old.

SONDRA:

I didn't know that. And all these years we've been celebrating and singing our heads off every February 28th, "Happy birthday dear Peter" and it's all been a lie.

PETER:

Shocking, isn't it? But at least now you know.

SONDRA:

I'll never be the same.

JUDITH enters reading a letter.

PETER:

Didn't your mother ever warn you not to walk and read at the same time?

JUDITH:

(stops, dripping with sarcasm) How did you *know*? That's exactly what it says here. "Judy, remember not to read a letter and walk at the same time. Love, Mom."

PETER:

See. I'll know just what to write to my kids when they're in college.

JUDITH:

(reads on) "... and don't forget to go to Ash Wednesday service this week."

SONDRA:

... and don't forget to study for three major mid-terms on Thursday.

PETER:

Which means no time for Ash Wednesday services, which is just fine with me.

JUDITH:

(as MOM) Peter, if you don't go to Ash Wednesday service we can't have your birthday party.

PETER:

That's all right. We'll all be gone anyway. It's next Sunday.

JUDITH:

March 1?

PETER:

February 29. Leap Day.

JUDITH:

Really?

PETER:

It's Leap Day this February 29th and I'll be – oh, never mind.

SONDRA:

Am I picking up something here about you and some bad feelings about Ash Wednesday?

PETER:

It's the beginning of Lent, isn't it?

JUDITH:

Yes, and...?

PETER:

I hate Lent.

JUDITH:

Because...

SONDRA:

You have to give up something?

JUDITH:

Chocolate?

SONDRA:

Coffee?

JUDITH:

Movies?

PETER:

Nah. I've never done that anyway.

JUDITH:

What then?

PETER:

This is going to sound very weird. I hate Lent because it leads up to Easter.

SONDRA:

Easter? That's the fun part.

JUDITH:

Chocolate bunnies.

SONDRA:

Balloons.

JUDITH:

Peeps.

SONDRA:

(sings) “Jesus Christ is ris’n today, ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-le-eh-lu-oo-jah!”

PETER:

Exactly. That’s where I start to have problems. “Jesus Christ is ris’n today.”

JAMES enters.

JUDITH:

James, Peter was just telling us that he’s not a big fan of Easter.

JAMES:

Why not?

JUDITH:

He doesn’t like the hymns.

PETER:

I didn’t say that.

JAMES:

(he has no time for this conversation right now) Sondra, could we do this? I’m in a major hurry.

SONDRA:

Sure, go ahead. You’re reading the Gospel.

JAMES:

Yes. *(goes to lectern)*

“Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to

accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighted down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” – not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.”

SONDRA:

Thanks, James.

JAMES:

Hope the mic works tomorrow. That it then?

PETER:

You know, I envy Peter, James and John.

JUDITH:

You’re just full of intriguing little remarks this morning, Peter. Okay, I’ll bite. Why do you envy Peter, James and John?

PETER:

Well, they’re kind of like us – me, you know. They’re kind of hanging around trying to follow Jesus, believe in him, “take up their cross,” you know.

JAMES:

Peter makes his big confession of faith a few verses before.

PETER:

Yeah, but they still must have wondered... And then, Jesus takes them up on the mountain and they get this crazy vision. Jesus’ clothes light up; Moses and Elijah appear; a cloud comes over them.

SONDRA:

And a voice says: “This is my Son, my Chosen.”

JUDITH:

“Listen to him.”

JAMES:

God’s voice.

PETER:

Maybe. *(All look at him reprovngly)* Probably.

JUDITH:

I’m waiting for the envy part.

PETER:

Well, frankly, they got a Transfiguration. And I didn’t. I mean, I haven’t had one.

JUDITH:

Peter, you’ve been working too hard. You’ll feel better after break.

PETER:

But I won’t. That’s why I hate Lent. Every year, we go through this six-week process leading up to the telling of this fantastic story: Jesus risen from the dead.

JAMES:

From one fantastic story to another. Transfiguration to Resurrection.

SONDRA:

But these stories are true.

JUDITH:

Yeah, we’re not talking about “The Return of the King” here. Well, I guess we are in a way, but... uh... you know what I mean.

PETER:

You say they’re true. And I want to believe they’re true. And I do, mostly. It’s just that in Holy Week and Easter, I come face to face with them. And sometimes I can profess them, boldly, and

sometimes, well... I have trouble. Doubt. Most of the time, I can have my little religious life. Keep a little veil over my face, like it says, and deal. But this time of year, it seems like we've got to take the veil off.

JAMES:

Face to face.

SONDRA:

This is deep, Peter. Have you talked with anybody about it?

PETER:

Isn't that what I'm doing? Here?

JUDITH:

So you envy the disciples?

PETER:

In a way.

JUDITH:

Like they had it easy because of the Transfiguration experience?

PETER:

Easier than me. They were right there. They saw it. Didn't they?

JAMES:

And what did they do about it? After they saw it?

SONDRA:

(reads) "And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen."

JUDITH:

Some evangelists!

SONDRA:

They told the story later. After the Resurrection. Like us. After the Resurrection.

PETER:

You're so into this, Sondra. So sure of it.

SONDRA:

How can you tell?

PETER:

Because, every once in a while – when you read, when you pray – I can see the story in your face. Your face changes.

JAMES:

Then let's complete the scene. Let's give Peter his Transfiguration. I'll be Moses.

JUDITH:

I'll be Elijah.

PETER:

Where's the voice?

SONDRA:

Right here. (*Reads Luke*) "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him."

PETER:

Sondra, don't you have doubts about this story?

SONDRA:

The Transfiguration story?

PETER:

Yeah, and the Resurrection.

SONDRA:

I do. Often.

PETER:

So, what do you do about them?

SONDRA:

I, guess, I... come to church.

JAMES:

And, if you're lucky, the preacher happens to say just what you need to hear to strengthen your faith?

SONDRA:

That happens, sometimes. But what happens all the time is that I get to say things out loud, in front of people.

PETER:

"... by open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God..."

JUDITH:

You mean the creed?

SONDRA:

All of it. From the beginning to end, including, "Thank the Lord and sing His."

JUDITH:

The "Communion-is-finally-over" song.

SONDRA:

Yes.

JAMES:

"Tell everyone what God has done."

JUDITH:

And not keep silent and tell no one any of the things we have seen.

PETER:

It's hard.

JUDITH:

But it's leap day.

END