

Jerry's Journal

Only if we adore someone beyond ourselves will we stop adoring ourselves.



The above quote was penned by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (May 1, 1885 - April 10, 1955) a Jesuit priest, philosopher, paleontologist and geologist. Many of this priest's writings were censored by the Catholic Church during this man's lifetime because his views were thought to be too radical. Teilhard has since been posthumously praised by both Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis.

De Chardin wrote that we reach moral maturity on the day we realize we really have only one choice in life: Genuflect before Someone or something higher than ourself or begin walking down a path that will lead to self-destruction.

Hopefully, we come to this truth sooner rather than later in life. We feel within ourselves a constant, natural, inborn quest towards yielding to or self-surrender to that which is a higher power. We only feel good about ourselves when we don't put ourselves at the center of this world and we only feel right about what we are doing when we give something of ourselves away. In other words, we are at our happiest when our lives are not just about ourselves.

From this we see that we are built for self-sacrifice, and *ultimately* martyrdom. This is one of the greatest paradoxes in life: we only experience the true meaning of life when we are dying to ourselves and giving something of ourselves away.

We understand this in the truth of the following axiom: I defy you to show me a selfish person who is truly happy! In the spirituality of the early Christian communities, it wasn't just a question of being unselfish; it was also a question of dying, really dying. The early Christians believed we are intended for martyrdom, that dying as a martyr was a normal way for a Christian to end his or her life. To live out discipleship was to die physically as a martyr.

The belief that the ideal way to die as a Christian was through martyrdom endured for the first three hundred years of Christianity until the persecutions stopped and Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. At that point, a spirituality developed within which martyrdom was conceived more symbolically by giving up one's blood, drop-by-drop through selflessness, through sacrificing one's hopes and dreams for the sake of another, through giving away one's life through duty, through letting oneself be attentive to the needs of others.

We would be happier if we understood this. Conversely, when we try to live our lives by making things just about ourselves, we either end up too full of ourselves or too empty of integrity, conscience, morals and principles. There is no neutral space between these two. The early Christians, with their spirituality of martyrdom,

understood all this. Only one thing can save us from infantile pomposity, pretentiousness, self-righteousness and bitterness, namely, some form of martyrdom.

There is a reason for this. We are made in God's image and likeness and, because of this, we carry deep inside ourselves an immense fire; a fire of life, creativity and transcendence. We burn with a fire from within our souls, a fire with meaning, purpose and direction. It is a fire to act as Jesus did and, therefore, it is a fire of crucifixion and martyrdom. We are born to live for others and we are born to die for them. We can only be happy when we are working to accomplish this goal.

Yes, the longing for martyrdom comes in various disguises, some lofty and, regrettably, some which are improper and dishonorable (the maiming and taking the lives of others through acts of violence).

When understood in its proper context, we can see martyrdom as imbedded into our soul and come to the realization that real maturity means taking on the cross, in some form, as we follow where Christ has gone before us.

Fr Jerry Slowinski



The Old Testament and Gospel readings for today are NOT warm and fuzzy. They are challenging to say the least. But life would be boring if there were no challenges to bring us back to reality and in the end make us stronger. These two readings tell us that we must let go of what binds us. Let go and let God. Our ways are definitely not God's ways. Let's delve right in!

The Old Testament reading is from the Book of Genesis. It is the story of the fall of mankind. Original sin takes hold of us and binds us. Adam and Eve thought they were strong. Strong enough to strike out on their own, setting God aside by partaking of the fruit from the tree which God had forbidden them to eat. They had been convinced that they could handle it, handle life on their own. What does Adam do? He doesn't take responsibility for his actions and blames Eve. What does Eve do? She doesn't take responsibility for her actions and blames the serpent, Satan. That didn't work out too well for them. It doesn't work out too well for us today either. I wonder what would have happened if they actually did take responsibility? We will never know. We can only learn from past mistakes or be destined to repeat them.

In the Gospel Jesus is “home” and a crowd gathers. The crowd thinks that what Jesus is saying and doing is crazy. They say, “he is out of his mind” and “he is possessed...” Jesus talks about inner conflict. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Then Jesus goes on to say that no one can enter a “strong man’s house” to steal or “plunder” unless they bind him up first. There is a great lesson for all of us in the readings from today’s Mass.

Here’s what I’d like us to think about. Take some time this week to do some introspection. What in our past or present binds us from our relationship with God? Do we, like Adam and Eve, strike out on our own, putting God aside, and putting ourselves and our plans above God’s plans for us because we think we are “strongmen” and can do everything on our own? Do we think that God’s plans for us are just “crazy talk?” I know that I have been guilty of that!

We can’t do it on our own. That’s a fruit of a tree that’s hard to swallow. But swallow it we must. There is one thing that Jesus tells us that we can hang onto. We are part of Jesus’ family, his sisters and brothers, if we let go and let God by doing his will. There is always hope for us. We are only hopeless when we separate ourselves from God and refuse to accept his will and his help. Jesus said, “all sins and blasphemies that people utter will be forgiven them.” The only unforgivable sin, the sin against the Holy Spirit, is the unrepentant sin. If a sin is unrepentant it causes us to have an “unclean spirit.”

It was out of the ultimate love that Jesus died for our sins. The same ultimate love that gives us the sacrament of reconciliation. We can repent and receive forgiveness and absolution through that sacrament. We can always return to do God’s will and receive his...

Peace, Love, and Blessings,
Deacon Marc