



All We Own by Joe Sixpack

I must admit, like most Americans I've been living most of my life on the materialistic side. There's nothing wrong with possessing "things" or having lots of money. In fact, I've been rich and now I'm poor, but I know which one I prefer. (HINT: It ain't the latter.) After all, if we didn't have fruits from our labors, there would be no way the Church could acquire what she needs to fulfill the mission given her by her Founder. Somebody has to pay the electric bill, among other things.

But materialism is sort of like emotions; both will lie to you every time. When we rely on and trust in our emotions more than relying on and trusting objective realities (and God is the Great Reality), we end up devastatingly disappointed, and often times we get ourselves into trouble. Likewise, when we place trust, dependence and pride in the material things our labors have provided, we end up buying into a great big lie that causes us to fail to put God first—and rest assured that God must be first in our lives, or we'll pay for it in the next life.

Chances are that I don't know you, but that doesn't mean I can't tell you a little bit about yourself. What I can tell you about yourself is, after all, just human nature, and I understand human nature. Contrary to the opinion of some, I *am* a human, so I can relate to human nature. What I can tell you about yourself—whether you're a top 2% earner or living in abject poverty—is that you possess something material you wouldn't dream of departing with. Maybe it's a book, or a family heirloom, or a certain car, or a piece of jewelry, or a... You get the picture. You probably also dream of owning a certain thing(s) or having a set sum of money. There's nothing wrong with that under normal circumstances. It just means you're human. And you've been given that ability to enjoy your possessions or dream about having other things from God. It's His way of "wiring" us to think about the great things in store for us that Jesus promised us in the next life.

But where we go awry is when "things" or money begin to be valued by us more than a relationship to our Creator. I'm merely speculating, mind you, as I can't read what's in anyone's heart, but I suspect a relationship to God is way down the list of priorities for many more people than we care to admit. While I can't read hearts, actions and words and attitudes are pretty good yardsticks to measure where hearts are at.

Are you one of those folks who receive Communion then dart out the door before Father even finishes putting the sacred vessels away? Maybe you grumble about having to get ready for Sunday Mass. How many times have you skipped out on Mass altogether to do something else

or go somewhere? Do you attend Mass when you're traveling? Of the 128 hours in your week, how many of them do you spend keeping Jesus company in the tabernacle? Hmm. Lots of interesting yardsticks, and these are just a few of the thousands we could use. A meager perusal of the Church's teachings on the Ten Commandments provides *lots* of yardsticks!

"*You're being judgmental again, Joe!*" No, I'm not. Jesus said not to judge others (Matthew 7:1), true enough. But He also said we'll know where hearts are by people's fruits (Matthew 7:20). I'm just being a fruit inspector.

You know, it's been said God is a jealous God, and I believe it's true. After all, the Church very plainly teaches the reason God created us is to know, love and serve Him in this life so we can be happy with Him in the next. Not only is He jealous, but He's also a perfect parent. If your child is not focusing on the priorities you've set for him/her because there are huge distractions in the child's life (and this is especially true of teenagers), what good parent among you wouldn't remove that distraction for the benefit of the child you love? You get that sense of parenting as a reflection of the Perfect Parent. And rest assured, He will remove the distraction that keeps you from focusing on Him as your end-all-be-all of human existence one way or another—whether it be through loss of money or possession or... death and subsequent judgement. I know; the former happened to me.

At the end of the day, you don't possess nearly what you think you do. When it comes down to the finish line in the race of life, you really only own your soul and the virtues & vices you've acquired along the way. Actually, your soul isn't a possession, but rather who you are. Virtues and vices? We're quick to admit ownership of our virtues, but vices not so much. But believe you me, God will see to it that we all admit ownership of our vices when He calls us for our particular judgement. I don't know about you, but that scares the daylights out of me! So it behooves us all to focus on acquiring more virtues and doing away with our vices. Believe it; individual judgement comes much quicker than we'd like to believe.

I've got good news, though. This little story called *Salvation History* is told in a best selling book. I've read it all the way through and know how it ends. Guess what? If we persevere in making Him the focus of our lives, we win in the end. Then we can have all we desire. There'll be no more fears, no more worries, no more tears, no more pain or suffering. Even if you live in a mansion now, it will seem like a shack compared to what Jesus has prepared for those who love Him above all else. So renounce your "things" and money as your priorities and focus on ridding yourself of your vices—even the little bitty ones—and let's all work toward living in eternity together. Once again, that's What We Believe... Why We Believe It.

If you have questions on this or anything else about the Catholic faith, go to JoeSixpackAnswers.com to get your questions answered. If you can't find the answers you need, go to the "Ask Joe" page to ask me directly. I'm always available to you.