

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
May 1, 2016
Spiritual Ponderings
Wisdom of Fulton Sheen

Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen could arguably be the most prolific Catholic writer that the Catholic Church in the United States ever produced. In addition to all his writings, he also had a very popular radio show (in the days before television) and eventually his own television show. One of his most famous quotes is the following: "There are not one hundred people in the United States who hate The Catholic Church, but there are millions who hate what they wrongly perceive the Catholic Church to be." For the month of May I would like to explore a small book of his called: *Thoughts For Daily Living*. While this book is small it is packed with many powerful ideas for us to ponder. His words will be in bold and my reflection will be in regular font.

There is no one who does not want to be happy. To seek happiness is a proof of our imperfection. As Pascal expressed it: "All men have happiness as their object: there is no exception. However different the means they employ, they all aim at the same end."

Some times we ask the question "how can someone do this or that?" This is really the wrong question to ask. The real question should be "why does this person think this action will lead them closer to happiness." A person with a short temper lets the temper rage because he or she feels that the moment of release will earn some sort of respect, or fear and this will lead to happiness. A person who stays in an abusive relationship does so because they think that they will never find anything that will make them happier and so the little amount of happiness they have now is better in their mind than not having any happiness. God designed us for happiness and He desires to help us find it. This does not mean the road to happiness is clear or easy.

If you put a penny close enough to your eye, you can blot out the sun.

I thought that this was a beautiful image for the sin of pride. Pride distorts our reality and makes us think that we are the center of the universe instead of God. Pride also in some ways narrows our vision. Pride keeps us fixated on ourselves and not on others. Our world definitely gets bigger the less selfish we become in life.

Riches in great abundance have a peculiar quality; they make men more greedy. As Thomas Jefferson said, "I have not observed men's honesty to increase with their riches."

The following poem I think summarizes the problem with making riches your ultimate goal in life. "Money will buy, A bed but not sleep; Books but not brains; Food but not appetite; Finery but not beauty; A house but not a home; Medicine but not health; Luxuries but not culture; Amusements but not happiness; Religion but not salvation; A passport to everywhere but heaven. - Original source unknown. We are made for love and love cannot be bought. Dr. John Gottman a relationship expert who has written many books talks about how money symbolizes are dreams and our hopes so often when we are arguing about money we are talking about our dreams and our hopes. These are things that we hold very dear to us.

This spirit of covetousness hardens the soul, and drew from Our Divine Lord the warning: "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." "But woe to you rich! For you are now having your comfort."

Pope Benedict XVI in his first homily as pope said the following: "The world promises you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness." If our pursuit of riches doesn't direct your energy away from doing God's will, then it will most likely make you complacent.

There is a peculiar paradox about riches: the more covetous the rich man is, the poorer he is, for there is always something he wants. But the consecrated souls who have taken the vow of poverty are richer than all the rich, for there is nothing they desire; therefore they possess everything.

Learning to be content with one has makes one happier than pursuing what one does not have.

In any case, how foolish to make happiness consist in that which one day we must leave. If riches are really ours, why can we not take them with us?

As the redneck joke goes, “no one has ever seen a trailer hitch on a hearse before.”

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
May 8, 2016
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Wisdom of Fulton Sheen

I do not think that I can get tired of reading the writings of Archbishop Fulton Sheen. Every time, I read his works, I always work away with a greater insight into my faith but also into life in general. For the month of May, I would like to share with you some insights from his book called *Thoughts For Daily Living*. Quotes from the book will be in bold and my commentary will be in the normal font.

Riches and honors are witnesses to excellence or prominence, but they do not constitute it. Making honor the goal of life is to make our happiness depend upon others, and happiness should be something no one can take away. Furthermore if honor is the ideal of life, then disgrace is the only sin.

A wise priest once told me “30% of the people will love you, 30% of the people will hate you, and 30% of the people just won’t care about you. He never did tell me about the 10%. There are times when I am happy and healthy despite the fact that 30% of the people out there do not like me. While it is nice to be appreciated, I find true happiness comes from doing what is right even if not everyone appreciates it. I have never been truly happy for a long period of time doing evil.

It is really not honor based on virtue which men seek today, but rather reputation, which is measured more by its width than its depth. Reputation is often popularity and, like a breeze, it cannot be kept. You must enjoy it while blows.

Bishop Robert Barron stated that the saddest part of the steroid scandal in baseball was that people like Mark McGuire, Sammy Sosa, and Barry Bonds did not start off using steroids. They only started using steroids at a point in which they began to feel that they were losing their edge in order to remain in the spotlight a little while longer. What damage did they do to their reputation and their bodies because they became addicted to the praise of others? Are there bad things that you have done in order to remain in the spotlight for example put others down?

The youth of today is not in danger because of its love of pleasures, but because it worships the wrong kind of heroes.

I have never been a big football fan but I was a fan of Marshal Faulk’s ability to run the football down the field. It seemed that every time I saw him play, he would somehow take the football for major gains. It was with great sadness that I learned that he had three children all the same age by three different women. He is a role model to many for his abilities on the field. I hope that those same people do not imitate his off the field behavior. This is part of the reason why the family is falling apart in our society today.

St. Philip Neri, seeing a condemned, man led to the guillotine said: “There goes Philip Neri, except by the grace of God.”

I always wondered who was the first to say “except by the grace of God, there go I,” and now I know. Everything we have is a gift from God. We should never assume that we would do differently than others if we were in their situation. This phrase should also make us more grateful for all that we do have.

The truly happy person does not really care what others may think of him, for true glory consists in the judgment of God rather than in the judgments of men.

Ultimately the judge of my life is not any human being but Jesus Christ. He is the only one I need to impress. Sadly, if I am not careful I can spend all my life trying to impress everyone but the one who matters.

No stronger works escaped the Divine Lips than those who directed against popularity seekers , who sought to have their names publicized in the marketplaces then, as they do today in the newspapers” All their work they do in order to be seen by men; for they widen their phylacteries and enlarge their tassels, and love the first place at suppers and the front seats in the synagogues and greetings in the market place.”

Sin may lead to momentary pleasures but it will never lead to everlasting happiness (joy).

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
May 15, 2016
Spiritual Ponderings
Wisdom of Fulton Sheen

Archbishop Fulton Sheen’s advice in his book, *Thoughts for Daily Living*, is truly inspiring; in my opinion so here are some more quotes from his book in bold and my commentary in regular font.

Happiness does not consist in the abundance of things a man possesses, nor does it reside in the satisfaction of different specific desires—for example, pleasure at one moment, publicity at another. Rather happiness is conditioned on two things: an overall purpose in life, and, second, the crushing of egotism and selfishness.

When I stop to think about the times that I am truly happy, I realize that they are also the times in which I am seeing someone else succeed because of the work that I have done. One of my favorite parts of a Luke 18 retreat is the warm fuzzies. A warm fuzzy is basically a bunch of little strings tied together in a ball. You take one string and give it to another person as you give them a compliment. Instead of participating, I like to stand off in the corner of the room and eaves drop. I enjoy hearing the teens and other adults share with one another how the weekend has affected them for the better. I know, even if they do not know, that none of the weekend’s events would have happened, if I had not help set the scene and that is enough for me. I know that I would ruin the moment if I would burst into the warm fuzzy exchange and demand people tell me how great I am.

Hell is the ego affirmed in time, in isolation and in eternity in conflict with other egos who are constantly negating our ego. Hell is composed of completely egotistic persons! Those who presently live with such people now have a foretaste of hell. The reason the ego has to be naughted is because unless a “For sale” sign is hung on it, neither God nor neighbor can move in. Only when the glass tube has had all the air removed and becomes a vacuum, can it become the medium for X-rays which can penetrate the flesh and brain though we see it not. So long as there remains the ego or selfishness by which we affirm our pleasure over others, we are consumed by an inner unhappiness. In hell, the ego burns—a sensation that egotists dimly feel in the gnawing that goes on inside their conscience.

There is one person in my life that makes my life a living hell because he always wants something. The moment I provide him with one thing he wants, he decides he needs something else. He only shows gratitude as a way of setting himself up to make another request. I can definitely see hell being similar to this: where everyone is so self-centered that no one gets anything. It reminds me of the following story... From the mystics of the Middle Ages comes the story of a young man who was granted by God a glimpse of both heaven and hell. God decided that it would be best if he showed the young man hell first and so God and the young man descended into the netherworld. The man saw a group of people gathered in a magnificent dining hall. The table was prepared with the finest food and the delicious smell of the food filled the room. And at first the young man thought God must have mistakenly taken him to heaven first instead of hell but as he studied the faces of the people in the room he began to see that each person was filled with anger, sadness and disappointment. It became quite clear to the young man that the source of their discomfort and distress was that the all the forks and spoons in the room were too large for anyone to feed themselves with and so while they were able to smell and look at the mouth-watering food they were perpetually prevented from eating any of it. In a flash God then transported the young man to heaven and much to the young man’s surprise he found himself in a room that was almost identical to the room that he had seen in hell. The decorations were the same, the food was the same and there was even the same type of silverware which was too large for anyone to use. The difference was not in the surroundings or even in the meal the difference between heaven and hell was in the hearts of the individuals there

because the people in heaven instead of focusing on feeding themselves and thus being perpetually frustrated took the time to care and to feed the person next to them and thus everyone was able to be filled not only with the food but more importantly with love.

But even though it be difficult, there is a peace and a joy about the pursuit of Divine Happiness which the egotist cannot understand. Each trial and struggle has its strength as grace pours in from heaven above. The more the balloon of our egotism is shot full of holes, the more apertures are made for the influx of light and love.

Ego distorts our reality.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
May 22, 2016
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Wisdom of Fulton Sheen

“If you don't behave as you believe, you will end by believing as you behave.” - Fulton J. Sheen. The wisdom of Archbishop Fulton Sheen has always impressed me. He had a way of explaining things about religion and the modern world that made me think about the world and faith in new ways. The following quotes continue to be from his book: *Thoughts for Daily Living* and are in bold. My commentary will once again be in normal font.

We are living in what might be called a Period of Drive. The snow piles in drifts according to the variations of the winds. So, too, in certain moments of history minds are driven by every wind of doctrine and theory imaginable, lacking all standards by which to judge and evaluate what is happening to them.

The thing that scares me the most about modern society is that we are losing the ability to have a philosophical argument – an argument that is guided and governed by the rules of reason. What has been taken for granted for so long like the bodily differences between the sexes are being dismissed in favor of thoughts and feelings that cannot be grounded in reality.

At one moment people are amazed at the complexity and structure of the universe and in the next or very same moment the same people are declaring that there is no order at all to the universe. A drunk driver can be convicted of killing two people if he causes a crash in which a mother and her unborn child are killed even if the mother was on her way to an abortion clinic. A school nurse cannot give Tylenol to a child without parent's permission but a child can go and have an abortion without parental consent. Instead of trying to figure out what is right. People are striving to do what they want and then finding ways to justify it to themselves.

The great difference between a Christian or moral civilization and our post-Christian civilization is this: The former regarded the world as a scaffolding up through which souls climbed to the Kingdom of Heaven. When the last soul shall have climbed up through it, the scaffolding will be torn down and burned with feverent fire, not because it is base, but simply because it had done its work—it has brought us back again to God. This meant that there was always a set of values and a cargo of judgments by which the actions of the political and economic and social world could be judged at any one moment. These measurements were distance from the world in which we moved, just as the tape-measure is apart for the cloth. One knew whether or not he was making progress because there was always a fixed point of arrival.

Another big problem in the world today is that so few people think heaven exists. When talking to people about heaven, it becomes a place where they earthly desires are fulfilled and not the home of God. I am convince that there are many people in life who are going to be invited into heaven, walk-in and get upset with God because an end table is not where they think it should be and they are going to demand that God move it and God instead is going to tell them to go to hell because it is house. Others will find themselves in hell because they will choose to go there if they think they can find fulfillment. Catholics we train ourselves (or reorient)to learn to love the things of heaven like peace, forgiveness, hope, love, joy, etc.

In our contemporary civilization, there are no fixed points. We keep changing them and calling them progress. It is like playing basketball with a changing target; the point of the game at one moment is shooting the ball through the hoop, the next minute it is to hit the referee; the next moment it is to hit a movable basket which changes its location like a mechanical rabbit at a dog track. Nobody seems to be sure about the purpose of life hence many become discouraged about living any trip loses its zest unless there is a destination.

If anyone can decide what is right or wrong or what is the purpose of life then life will never be enjoyable because people will always move the goal posts on us. Rules help us enjoy the game as they direct us to develop different skill levels.

To get out of the mess the world is in, the man has to realize three things (1) He was not made for drifting, but for self-perfection and happiness. (2) This happiness can be thwarted freely by consenting to imperfection, to evil, and to sin. (3) but even when we consent to evil, there is still a way out and that is by having recourse to the Divine. This is sanctity, not politics.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
May 29, 2016
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"Far better it is for you to say: "I am a sinner," than to say: "I have no need of religion." The empty can be filled, but the self-intoxicated have no room for God." — Fulton J. Sheen. The wisdom of Archbishop Fulton Sheen has always impressed me. He had a way of explaining things about religion and the modern world that made me think about the world and faith in new ways. The following quotes continue to be from his book: *Thoughts for Daily Living* and are in bold. My commentary will once again be in normal font.

When a nation becomes more interested in the conflict of opinion than in maintenance of principle, the hour has struck for it to reexamine its conscience. When virtue and vice, patriotism and disloyalty, filth and purity are put into a boxing ring, in which the spectators have no other interest than to watch them knock out one another's brains, then the moment has come when there is nothing left so sacred that one ought to die in its defense, and nothing so evil that one ought to oppose it with all his strength.

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing. - Edmund Burke. Like it or not, we human beings need boundaries. A hotel for example desires for us to be comfortable and part of the way they make us comfortable is by making it a rule that we must wear clothes in the hallway. Instead of taking away our freedom it allows our freedom to flourish. If there was no such law many of us would stay locked up in our hotel room.

(1) Loss of purpose. When the engineer of a city waterworks becomes totally indifferent as to whether the pumps supply water to the citizens or not, he is at a loss to understand why they should fume and rage at their empty faucets. The murderer, who cannot accept the first principle that life is sacred, cannot get into his head why society should be so "vindictive" against him. The conductor of a train who believes that he should be "Broad-minded" about whether his train goes to Washington or Buffalo, cannot sympathize with irate passengers who are so "reactionary" as to believe that the train should travel to the destination to which it was appointed. When citizens lose a sense of the value and the meaning of life, they cannot see why right is any more important than wrong from that point on, ethics is reduced to the level of a sporting event or a smorgasbord.

The goal of life is to be the best person possible and not to have the most pleasurable experiences possible. If morals come down to how we feel then we really cannot hold rapists and murders accountable because they felt like doing what they did. This is absurd. The Catholic Church believes that all laws are meant to give structure to society so that we can all live in peace and harmony not so that we can get as most personal pleasure as possible.

Ignoring the end or goal of life, the only interest left is in the choice of means. Power then becomes more important than ethics, as our power to make atomic energy exceeds our moral capacity to decide how to use it. If men forget that the purpose of the chair is something on which they sit, they can live peacefully in the same room. But when the purpose of a chair is ignored, as it is in a brawl, then the chair becomes a means of combat, one individual decides it is a good instrument with which to smash heads. Such a combat regardless of where it is staged, can be interesting only to those who have lost inner peace and order, and have forgotten the supreme goal of life.

You can't win the race without knowing the finish line.

The second reason for the overemphasis on conflict of opinion is to be found in the emptiness of heart. Man's inner world, being without meaning, is painful and frustrating. To compensate for it, he tries to create the same disorder outside that he finds inside. As Franz Werfel put it, "He turns away from his inner world because its emptiness is more pain full than the emptiness of the factual world, which is at least relieved by noise and hubbub." When the human soul loses its own order, it becomes the instrument of destruction. When personality is directed to God and neighbor, there is an inner peace, but when the soul is torn from its appointed order, like an airplane motor that is ripped from the wing and tears into the cabin, there is nothing but chaos and confusion.

Peace is the tranquility of order and order implies the subordination of senses to reason, reason to faith, body to soul and the whole personality to God.

