

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

May 5, 2019

Spiritual Ponderings

“The Riddles of God”

The inspiration for this month’s ponderings comes from two different ideas merging together. The first idea comes from the idea of Commencement Addresses at High School and College graduations. Commencement speakers try to inspire those graduating to live better lives by offering them wisdom and advice. The second idea comes from a popular television show. On this show, one of the main characters has composed a list of rules that he uses to guide his life. He often shares these “rules for life” with his co-workers. Therefore, during the month of May, I will be sharing with you some of the “rules of my life” as wisdom and advice hoping it will help everyone live better lives. The title for this month’s Spiritual Ponderings comes from the following quote from Catholic writer G.K. Chesterton: “The riddles of God are more satisfying than the solutions of man.”

Rule #1: Before the Cross There is No Defense

Every bishop chooses an official motto. Archbishop Carlson’s motto is “Before the Cross There is No Defense.” These simple words come to mind every time, I have to make a decision. These words remind me of what is really important in life. They also remind me that I ultimately do not get to decide what is right or wrong because I am not God. I will therefore have to make an account of myself. I also believe that God has given me many blessings and so therefore he will expect much from me. The moments when I have felt the most shame and emotional pain has been when I realized how much I have hurt my mother in the p

Rule #2: Love is wanting what is best for the other person, even if means a sacrifice on my part.

There are many different meanings for the word “love”. I believe that St. John Paul’s definition is the best. St. John Paul II wrote: “Love is wanting what is best for the other person even if it requires a sacrifice on my part.” Therefore, when I say I love someone, I am saying that I want what is best for them and I am willing to assist them in becoming their best by putting their needs in front of my own. For example, I love my mother, when I choose to sacrifice my time and talk to her because I know a call from her son will brighten her day. Love is taking the time to sacrifice my need for revenge and offering the other person forgiveness instead.

Rule 3: The Virtue is in the middle of two vices

One moral teaching that changed my life is the idea that the virtue lays between two vices. For example the virtue of humility lies between the vice of pride and the vice of self-hate (self-contempt). When a person is humble, a person accepts who he or she is before God and others. This means we acknowledge our flaws but also our gifts and talents. Pride makes us to be greater than what we are and self-hate makes us lesser than what we are. Since, I am a visual learner, I like to think of myself shooting at a soccer goal. If I shoot too far to the left, I miss and if I shoot too far to the right I miss. In the same way when I build myself up too much I miss and when I tear myself down too much, I also miss. Another example is courage. Courage is the virtue between the vices of fool-heartiness and cowardliness.

Rule 4: No one ever earns the right to sin.

Jesus Christ suffered and died for me (us). Every time, I sin I show myself to be ungrateful for the gift of salvation. Every time, I sin I realize that I am no better than Adam and Eve who were given everything but still had to do things their way. Sin is also never an option because it harms others and myself. Most sins, I believe in life happen when we say to ourselves, I have done this much for God or I have endured so much that I earned the right to sin. When we think this way we fail to realize the true nature of sin.

Rule 5: No such thing as a private sin.

I have come to realize that every sin, I commit makes me less of the person God intended me to be and that means that I when I sin, I am not the best priest I can be, the best brother I can be, or the best friend I can be. When I sin, I can spend a lot of time rationalizing my sin away instead of loving the people around me. When I sin, I am like a watchman who has fallen asleep on the job.



Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

May 12, 2019

Spiritual Ponderings

“The Riddles of God”

What advice would you give to the young men and women who are graduating high school, college, or graduate school this month? During the month of May, I will be sharing with you some of the “rules of my life” as wisdom and advice hoping it will help everyone live better lives. The title for this month’s Spiritual Ponderings comes from the following quote from Catholic writer G.K. Chesterton: “The riddles of God are more satisfying than the solutions of man.”

Rule 6: “Nearly all vices are rooted in the future. Gratitude looks to the past and love to the present; fear, avarice, lust and ambition look ahead.” — C.S. Lewis.

This is a quote that I recently came across that really caught my attention. When I am grateful, I find myself happier than when I am not. When I realize how much God has given me in the past, it makes it easier to trust that God will provide for me in the future. When I trust in God, I do not need to protect myself or rely on material possessions for security. When I love someone, I have to love the person in front of me. I can’t love them if I am constantly comparing them to a past version of themselves and I definitely cannot love a potential version of someone because he or she may never reach that potential. All I can do is love the person in front of me in the presence. When I worry about the future because I do not trust in God, I find myself filled with fear and thus have a desire to protect myself. I find myself wanting to comfort myself by surrounding myself with material things. These things though ultimately fail to lift my spirit.

Rule 7: If we do not fill our mind with prayer, it will fill itself with anxieties, worries, temptations, resentments, and unwelcome memories. - Scott Hahn

This rule goes with Rule #6. The more I pray and build up my relationship with God the more I trust God will be there when I need Him.

Rule 8: “Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.” — Martin Luther King Jr

Many people who cause conflicts do so because they have a deep wound that they are afraid to let people see or touch. Their only way to stop these people from doing evil, is by creating a place where the person feels comfortable enough to examine the wound and realize that they do not have to behave the way they do. When you love someone, you show that you want what is best for them.

Rule 9: Don't judge a man by where he is, because you don't know how far he has come. -C. S. Lewis

We all come from different points and we all have different talents. No two people have had the same journey. Look at St. Dismas. St. Dismas, known as the good thief, was the thief who repentant at the last moment as he hung on a cross next to Jesus on Good Friday.

Rule 10: The version found written on the wall in Mother Teresa's home for children in Calcutta:

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway.

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.

-this version is credited to Mother Teresa

This rule might summarize all the other rules. Like many of these rules/guidelines it reminds me that the God of the universe wants to be in a relationship with me –WOW!!!



Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

May 19, 2019

Spiritual Ponderings

“The Riddles of God”

I have been blessed by God to have had many wise friends over the years and I have learned to appreciate the advice that they have given me. Their advice has helped me avoid making some of the same mistakes that they have or at least has helped me identify the mistakes that I have made. What advice would you give to the young men and women who are graduating high school, college, or graduate school this month? During the month of May, I will be sharing with you some of the “rules of my life” as wisdom and advice hoping it will help everyone live better lives. The title for this month’s Spiritual Ponderings comes from the following quote from Catholic writer G.K. Chesterton: “The riddles of God are more satisfying than the solutions of man.

Rule 11: The Fundamental Attribution Error

The Fundamental Attribution Error is the term in psychology that refers to our tendencies as human beings to judge others more harshly than ourselves. For example when someone cuts us off, we assume they did it with an evil intent but when we cut someone off it because we did it was an accident or because our circumstances forced us to.

When I begin to think of this rule, I think of the musical *Les Miserable*. The main character, Jean Val Jean, is a good man who finds himself breaking the law by stealing bread in order to feed his sister’s starving infant. He is sentenced to years of hard labor. After he is released, he spends the night at a bishop’s house and feeling desperate steals the bishop’s fine silver. He is caught but the bishop tells the police that he gave the silver to Jean Val Jean as a gift. He later tells Jean Val Jean that he has “purchased his soul” for God. Jean Val Jean goes on to show that he is a very moral and upstanding man.

Rule 12: “There but for the grace of God, go I”

This famous quote from St. Philip Neri (at least according to Archbishop Fulton Sheen), reminds me that I do not always know the situation another person has lived through that causes him or her to make the decisions that they make. For example, a person who has been bitten by a dog will more likely be afraid of a dog and in the same way someone who has been hurt doing good will be less likely to help the next person.

I know that because of my experience growing up in my family that there I handle certain situations better than others. I can assume therefore people will handle situations differently than I because of their background.

Rule 13: Neglect versus Malice

Another important thing I was told by a counselor was that I needed to remember that most people hurt others not with malice in their heart but rather out of neglect. This means that most people who hurt me, don’t intentionally plan on hurting me.

It also reminds me that I can sometimes hurt others without knowing it. I also challenge myself to try to never take others for granted.

Rule 14: Not all the Good

Another key lesson, I had to learn came from one of my teachers in the seminary. He reminded us that “God wants us to do the good but we are not required to do all the good.” He went on to explain that the devil is happy with me, when I avoid God or what God wants me to do by being slothful/lazy and the devil is also happy when I avoid doing God’s work or God by being too busy. For example a mother or father who neglects his or her family because they become too busy providing for the family’s extras fail to do what God wants just as much as parents who neglect their children. The song “The Cat’s in the Hat” comes to mind. As a priest, I can go out and give a lot of presentations that are well received but in the end not be doing God’s will because I am not serving my parish.

Rule 15: If you want to change the world, go home and love your family. - Mother Teresa

Rule 15 reminds me that God wants me to love the people that He puts into my life and this is my primary mission.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
May 26, 2019
Spiritual Ponderings
"The Riddles of God"

"Some people come in our life as blessings. Some come in your life as lessons." - Mother Teresa. What are the rules and principals that guide your life? What would you want to tell your younger-self? What was the best piece of advice that you received? What advice would you give to the young men and women who are graduating high school, college, or graduate school this month? During the month of May, I will be sharing with you some of the "rules of my life" as wisdom and advice hoping it will help everyone live better lives. The title for this month's Spiritual Ponderings comes from the following quote from Catholic writer G.K. Chesterton: "The riddles of God are more satisfying than the solutions of man.

16. I don't do great things. I do small things with great love. - Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa has always been a hero of mine. I admire the way that she gave up the safety of her normal life and went to serve the poorest of the poor. Anything that Mother Teresa says and does therefore holds a lot of weight for me. "Do small things with great love" is therefore a saying that comes to my mind when I am discerning what I should do in any situation.

This quote from Mother Teresa, that I have heard many people quote over and over again, reminds me that I don't have to fix a problem to help someone. All I have to do is be willing to do something small like spend time with them, cook them a meal, listen, etc.

17. Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless. - Mother Teresa

I know that my day is always better, when people give me a compliment and while I do not have much to give, I can always give people a kind word. I try to make it a goal to compliment five people a day. I also remind myself that it often takes ten positive comments to overtake one negative comments. I therefore try to limit my negative comments and

18. God didn't call me to be successful, He called me to be faithful. - Mother Teresa

Sometimes there is nothing I want more than to be successful and at these moments, I am more likely to hurt others because I have misplaced my priorities. For example a person can become too busy trying to provide for their families than spending time with their families. The song the "Cats in the Cradle" comes to mind. I can become a successful priest who spends a lot of my time on television but if I neglect my parish (the responsibility given to me by my bishop) then I am not doing God's will.

This is also a reminder to me that prayer is more important than being busy.

19. I trust that God wouldn't give me more than I can handle. I just wish he didn't have such faith in me. - Mother Teresa

When I look at the stories of the Israelites in the desert, I see time and time again, that God has a plan for them but they don't trust. Knowing that God will not give me anything I can't handle allows me to step up the plate with confidence.

20. Positive Sentiment Override

The most important lesson, I learned in my time battling depression is that I can control my mood. The key to me controlling my emotions comes to the idea of positive sentiment override. The more positive feelings that I feel toward someone the more I will put up with their negative. I therefore stack the deck and try to think about as many positive things about a person that I have conflict with so that I can put up with their negative.

At one of my parishes, there was a staff person that I could not stand and I found it hard working with this person. I began to think about three positive things about this person before I would meet with him or her and slowly overtime, I

began to treat this person better and he or she began to treat me better. We never did become best friends, but I was sad when he or she moved to a different parish.

