

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

December 3, 2017

Spiritual Ponderings

Spiritual Randomness

For the month of December, I decided to not have just one topic for my Spiritual Ponderings. Instead, I will be sharing with you many random things that I have pondered over the last year. I hope and pray that each of these topics is exactly what you or a loved one needs to hear.

A New Way to Look at the Beatitudes.

Earlier this year, I read a short story about Rabbi Joseph Schneerson. He was a leader of a Hasidic Jewish community in the early days of Russian Communism. He would suffer greatly for his faith spending a good portion of his life in prison. One morning in 1927, as he prayed in a Leningrad synagogue, secret police rushed in and arrested him. They took him to a police station and worked him over, demanding that he give up his religious activities. He refused. The interrogator brandished a gun in his face and said, "This little toy has made many a man change his mind."

Rabbi Schneerson answered, "This little toy can intimidate only that kind of man who has many gods and but one world. Because I have only one God and two worlds, I am not impressed by this little toy."

Through his defiance of the communist authority Rabbi Schneerson affirmed his belief in God. At this moment of my life, God has not asked me to affirm my belief in Him in the same way. I can affirm my belief in Him though in a different way – by living out the Eight Beatitudes.

I recently learned that living out the 8 Beatitudes is a way in which I can show other people who I think God is (affirm His being) and who I think God is not (reject false idols).

For example the following four Beatitudes affirm God's being.

1. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Affirms that our God is a God of Mercy.
2. Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. Affirms that our God is a God who respects us.
3. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Affirms that our God is a God who desires the best for us.
4. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Affirms that our God is a God of peace.

Living out the remaining four Beatitudes show that I am rejecting the false gods of this world.

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Rejects false god of wealth
2. Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted. Rejects false god of pleasure.
3. Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth. Rejects false god of power.
4. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Rejects false god of honor/fame

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

December 10, 2017

Spiritual Ponderings

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Here is another random thought for this week's Spiritual Pondering.

This random thought came to me after reading the following Gospel from Mathew: **"Jesus said to his disciples: "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."** (Matthew 5:13-16)

The thing that strikes me the most about the above Gospel passage is that Jesus tells us, His listeners, that "we ARE the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World. Jesus did not place any qualifiers on that statement. He does not say that we are the Light of the World and Salt of the Earth if we obey His commands. For me this passage is to reaffirm that we human beings are special and we are made in the image of God. This can be a scary thought and this makes me think of the following quote from Marianne Williamson: **"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."**

Since we are light and salt, we have a choice to make. Will we use our gifts and talents for good or bad? Salt for example can be used to preserve food or to destroy soil (The Romans were known for throwing huge amounts of salt on enemy ground making their farms infertile). Light can be used to show people the way or it can be used to blind people.

Many members of the early Church answered the call to change the world. The Roman Empire was a place where infanticide was legal. On your eighth day of birth, you were presented to your father and if he turned his back on you, you would be tossed into the alley and left to die. Christians stopped this practice in the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire was known for its use of slave. Slavery eventually ended because of Christians. The Roman Empire had Gladiator games and Christians eventually put an end to them as well.

What modern day challenges can we get rid of today? What about abortion? What about racism? What about the Death Penalty?

Do not think that we can't? Look at John Paul II following Christ ended communism. Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu put an end to Apartheid. And let us not forget all the good that Mother Teresa did in her lifetime.

Where can you get started? What about helping Saint Vincent DePaul Society with their work for the poor? May be you could stand up for life by joining 40 Days Life.

Remember that Jesus did not light you on fire with the Holy Spirit so that you can hide.

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December 17, 2017
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Another Random Spiritual Pondering

Joe had asked Bob to help him out with the deck after work, so Bob just went straight over to Joe's place. When they got to the door, Joe went straight to his wife, gave her a hug and told her how beautiful she was and how much he had

missed her at work. When it was time for supper, he complimented his wife on her cooking, kissed her and told her how much he loved her.

Once they were working on the deck, Bob told Joe that he was surprised that he fussed so much over his wife. Joe said that he'd started this about 6 months ago, it had revived their marriage, and things couldn't be better.

Bob thought he'd give it a go. When he got home, he gave his wife a massive hug, kissed her and told her that he loved her. His wife burst into tears. Bob was confused and asked why she was crying.

He said, "This is the worst day of my life. First, little Billy fell off his bike and twisted his ankle. Then, the washing machine broke and flooded the basement. And now, you come home drunk!"

All relationships, especially marriage, are hard work. I have noticed over the last few years that many people enter into relationships at a disadvantage because they seem to think that all arguments can be avoided. I believe this is not possible. We should not get discouraged because I think arguing with another person is not a sin. It is rather how you argue. Here are some things to watch out for so that you can make sure your next argument with someone is a healthy one.

The first thing to do is avoid criticism. You can complain about an event or action someone did but you do not need to attack their personal character. Attacking another person's character in the midst of an argument almost always dooms the argument to failure.

The second thing to do is to avoid treating others with contempt. Always try to be as courteous as possible even if the other person is not. Don't forget to avoid the trap of assuming the high moral ground in an argument.

The third thing is to be careful about how you respond to the situation. Be aware of what buttons others are pushing in you. Do not allow being attacked to become an excuse for attacking the other person.

The fourth thing is to realize what triggers your feeling of hopelessness or causes you to simply give up. When you know what your triggers are you are more likely to remain patient.

The fifth thing you can do is soothe yourself and each other. Remind each other that you are children of God. Calm your fears and trust in God.

The sixth thing: Compromise (Don't try to get your way at someone else's expense but don't let someone change your core values).

Finally be tolerant of each other's faults. We are all imperfect.

Some other quick tips.

1. Make statements that start with "I" instead of "You"
2. Describe what is happening, don't evaluate or judge.
3. Be clear. Be polite. Be appreciative
4. Don't store things up.

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December 24, 2017

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Another Random Spiritual Pondering

There was once a young lion cub who wandered away from his father and mother. He wanted to see if he would get the same respect from the other animals in the jungle that his father did. The little lion cub came up upon a group of monkeys and asked them "Who is the king of the jungle?"

The monkeys out of fear responded "You are mighty lion."

The young cub then responded "You better not forget it."

The young cub then came across a pack of lemurs and he asked them "Who is the king of the jungle?"

The lemurs all responded "You are mighty lion."

The young cub then responded "You better not forget it."

Finally the young cub came across a herd of elephants and he asked them "Who is the king of the jungle?"

The mighty elephant did not say a word. He simply grabbed the young lion with its trunk and twirled him around a few times and then tossed him into the river.

The young lion cub all wet looked at the elephants and responded "You did not know the answer, you did not have to get all mean about it."

I love this story because it reminds me of human beings. We go around thinking we are all hot stuff until the elephant (God) reminds us that we are not.

The Transfiguration, Resurrection, and Ascension all prove to us that God has no equal and that He also does not act haphazardly. He has a plan.

This is not about who will win for God has already one. The devil has no more chance of winning than I do of winning Wimbledon, the US Open, or UFC heavy weight title.

It is a part of God's plan. God is not acting haphazardly. The same thought and design that went into the creation of the world also went into the plan for our salvation. (Evident by Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration and how Jesus was able to explain everything on the road to Emmaus). We might not know where all the puzzle pieces go but God does. At the end of time we will see from eternal view point God's great masterpiece.

The Good news is that God invites us to participate in that plan. While everything that happens is a part of God's plan we are not pawns. God invited Abraham, Moses, Blessed Virgin Mary, the Apostles and you and I.

Who is the king of your life? We can make Jesus king of our minds by blocking out thoughts or images that are not of his. Choose wisely the books, television shows and radio programs that you watch. We can fill our minds with the voice of Jesus. Do we take time to pray, read the scriptures, have we adorned our homes with Sacred Images and placed Holy Water Fonts? Do we follow Jesus by attending Mass every Sunday and not just when we feel like it? Finally do we make Jesus the king of our actions as well? Do we choose to build people up or tear people down? Do we choose to do the moral thing or the thing that we desire to do?

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
December 31, 2017
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Spiritual Randomness

It is hard for me to believe that another calendar year is ending and a new one is beginning. I think 2017 will go down in my life as one of the years in where the most changes have taken place. As I look back upon 2017, I realize that there was simply no way of knowing what God had instore for me and as I look forward to 2018, I can only trust that the Lord will continue to guide me. The following are some quotes that I have come to appreciate over the last few years. I hope they will inspire you in the upcoming year.

01. Let us remember the past with gratitude, live the present with enthusiasm, and look forward to the future with confidence. – Pope John Paul II
02. The world promises you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness. — Pope Benedict XVI
03. “Instead of being just a church that welcomes and receives by keeping the doors open, let us try also to be a church that finds new roads, that is able to step outside itself and go to those who do not attend Mass, to those who have quit or are indifferent.” – Pope Francis
04. “We cannot be Christians part-time. If Christ is at the center of our lives, he is present in all that we do.”
05. “If you are what you should be, you will set the whole world ablaze!” -St. Catherine of Sienna
06. “There are more tears shed over answered prayers than over unanswered prayers.” -St. Teresa of Avila
07. “From silly devotions and sour-faced saints, good Lord, deliver us!” -St. Teresa of Avila
08. “All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.” -St. Francis
09. “We can do no great things; only small things with great love.” -Blessed Teresa of Calcutta
10. “Walk with your feet on earth, but in your heart be in heaven.” – St. John Bosco

NEW YEAR PRAYER

Dear Lord, We pray that this New Year will bring us closer to You. May we take the time to get to know You. Help us to truly celebrate the gifts You have graciously given us and use them to serve You and spread Your word, May we also see and love you in all the people we meet, so that in turn, they can see You in us. We know that all human relations take time if they are to grow and deepen. This is also true of our relations with You, the Father and the Holy Spirit, which must grow over the course of our lives. In this new year, let us realize that every action of ours no matter how great or small enables us to be in touch with You. Let us accept You in our lives, in the way it pleases You, as Truth, to be spoken, as Life, to be lived, s Light, to be lighted, as Love, to be followed, as Joy, to be given, as Peace, to be spread about, as Sacrifice, to be offered among our relatives, friends, neighbors and all people. Amen.