

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

June 7, 2020

Spiritual Ponderings

Go To Heaven

Archbishop Fulton sadly points out that people are more likely to tell people to go to hell than to tell them to go to heaven. He writes: "Nobody ever says 'Go to heaven.'" He therefore wrote a book he entitled *Go to Heaven: a Spiritual Road Map to Eternity*. Quotes from the book containing spiritual insights will be in bold and my reflections on these quotes will be in normal font.

**Hell is not related to an evil life, as is generally supposed, as a spanking is related to an act of disobedience, for a spanking need not necessarily follow disobedience, and rarely does in juvenile circles. Rather, hell is related to an evil life as blindness is related to the plucking out of an eye. Heaven is not related to a good life as a medal is related to a school examination; it is rather related to a good life as knowledge to study. By the mere fact that we apply our selves intellectually, we become learned.**

The early Christians used the word "metanoia" to describe Christian life. We often use the word "repent" in English when translating the word metanoia but the word "repent" falls a little short. Repent seems to mean for most people to stop doing the bad and start doing the good. The word "metanoia" is stronger. It literally means change the way you are thinking. For example, when people realized that the sun was the center of the solar system instead of the earthy, people had a metanoia – a new outlook on the way a person views life. Christians are called to move from a selfish way of thinking to an unselfish unconditional loving way of thinking. A person who thinks anger is the best way to handle conflict has to learn that forgiveness is a far better way. One does earn heaven like a Boy Scout earns his Eagle Badge. Instead one enters into heaven when one learns through the grace of God to make every act of his life of loving act.

**The organized atheism of the present hour is thus a projection of self-hatred; no man hates God without first hating himself. Persecution of religion is a sign of the indispensability of the anti-religious or atheistic attitude, for by the violence of hate and hopes to escape the irrationality of godlessness. The final form of this hatred religion is a wish to defy God and to maintain one's own evil in the face of his goodness and power.**

Most people who I have met that refer to themselves as fallen away Catholic or atheist hold an animosity toward the Church not because they are fallen away or atheist but rather because they are wounded and hurt. Their image of God for one reason or another is messed up. They do not see God as a loving Father as Jesus has taught us but instead, they see God as an uncaring Father who is more of a task master than a caring pastor. They therefore feel the need to rebel against God. The best way to deal with these people is to create a place where they feel safe enough to let go of these defense mechanisms and then to demonstrate by our own lives that we believe God is love.

**Modern anxiety is different from the anxiety of previous and more normal ages in two ways. In other days men were anxious about their souls, but modern anxiety is principally concern about with the body; the major worries of today are economic security, health; the major worries of today are economic security, health, the complexion, wealth, social prestige, and sex. To read modern advertisements, one would think that the greatest calamity that could befall a person would be to have dishpan hands or a cough in the T-zone.**

First let me say, that I don't know what a "cough in the T-zone is." The best I found was that the T-Zone is the part of your face that is made up of the forehead, nose, chin and area circling the mouth. This area is called the T-Zone because it shaped like the letter T. So, adding that piece of knowledge with the phrase being connected to dishpan hands leads me to believe that Fulton Sheen is referring to sort of cosmetic superficial problem.

I do wonder sometimes how many people actually do worry about their bodies more than they do their souls. It seems like everyone wants to be fit and that is not a bad thing. In fact, it is a good thing that I should work more myself. We have to be careful though that our desire to be fit and healthy does not lead us to being mean, rude, crude, violent, etc. If we cared as much about our souls as we do our bodies, we would be practicing exercises that would help us develop humility, courage, forgiveness, meekness, hope, charity, etc.

**Yet it is still true today that how one gets out of time (how one dies) is not so important as how one is in eternity.**

If we are easily an impatient person now on earth, we will spend all eternity as a frustrate person and thus be perpetually frustrated. If I am a person who would rather hold a grudge than offer forgiveness, I will spend all eternity drinking the spiritual poison of hate and hoping the other person dies. The Church wants us to avoid the seven deadly sins precisely because the Church does not want to spend all eternity committing them and leaving our selves perpetual frustrated.

**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**

**June 14, 2020**

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**There are no plains in the spiritual life; we are either going uphill or coming down.**

Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketchum in their book: *The Spirituality of Imperfection: Storytelling and the Search for Meaning* uses the image of health to talk about:

"Spirituality is a lot like health. We all have health; we may have good health or poor health, but it's something we can't avoid having. The same is true of spirituality: every human being is a spiritual being. The question is not whether we "have spirituality" but whether the spirituality we have is a negative one that leads to isolation and self-destruction or one that is more positive and life-giving."

There is no such thing as a "private" sin in the sense that each sin a person commits, affects others because he or she did not do all the good they should have. If a person lies for example, he or she now has to spend a lot of time become a better person and more time remembering the lie that they do not have the same amount of time to be helping someone else who needed it. Going backwards should not be considered a sin. Not addressing the issue is.

**The Christian is always bound to have a great advantage over the indifferent modern pagan, simply because he knows where he is going, whereas the modern pagan, knows nothing. The pagan must always be the pessimist, for he must always feel that this life is too short to give a man a chance, and the Christian will always be the optimist, for he knows that this life is loving enough to give a man a chance for eternity.**

One of the advantages that I had over some friends in college was that I knew what my major was going to be. As a seminarian

**The Christian finds a thrill in repetition because he has a fixed goal; the modern pagan finds repetition monotonous because he has never decided for himself the purpose of living.**

While I am not a runner, I have a few friends who are and many of them love running 5 and 10K races. A few aim at being able to run a marathon but most of them are content with competing in the shorter races. For them it is not the distance that matters but it is all about having another goal. It energizes them as they do their practice runs each day. There is a notable difference in the amount of energy and enthusiasm between the runners who have a race to compete in and those who are just running for the sake of staying fit. Those who know that they will be competing seem to enjoy it more and push themselves harder and they love the daily run a little more. Christians knowing our final destination should make the things of our daily lives more sacred because we know that they can lead us to heaven. When I have to forgive someone, I should see as an opportunity to move a step closer to heaven and not something that I have to do because God is making me do it.

**It is easy to find truth; it is hard to face it, and harder still to follow it. Modern education is geared to what it calls "extending the frontiers of truth", and sometimes this ideal is prized and used to excuse men from acting on old truths already discovered. The discovery of the size of a distant star creates no moral obligation; but the old truths about the nature and destiny of man can be reproached to the way one lives. Some psychologists and sociologists like to rap their knuckles at the door of truth about mankind, but they would run away if the door ever opened, showing man's contingency on God. The only people who ever arrived at a knowledge of God are those who when**

**the door is opened, accept that Truth and shoulder the responsibility it brings. It requires more courage than brains to learn to know God: God is the most obvious fact of human experience, but accepting Him is one of the most arduous.**

One of the hardest things that I had to do when facing my depression was to be honest with myself and accept responsibilities for the things that I could not control and give up the guilt I was feeling for things that had been out of my control.

I think it is important to realize also from the above quote that it does not matter how big the universe is or what started God's Divine Law is what is important. We need to ask ourselves sometimes: just because we can do something doesn't mean we should do it.

**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**

**June 21, 2020**

**Spiritual Ponderings**

**Go To Heaven**

Let us continue to encourage each other to move toward heaven by gaining insights from Fulton Sheen's "Spiritual Road Map". Archbishop Fulton sadly points out that people are more likely to tell people to go to hell than to tell them to go to heaven. He writes: "Nobody ever says 'Go to heaven.'" He therefore wrote a book he entitled *Go to Heaven: a Spiritual Road Map to Eternity*. Quotes from the book containing spiritual insights will be in bold and my reflections on these quotes will be in normal font.

**Escapists who want a religion without a cross call themselves agnostics in order to avoid the moral consequences of truth.**

No one enters into a branch of the military not expecting to go through bootcamp. In the same way no one should enter into a religion without realizing that there will be a time of preparation to align ourselves with the mission of the organization. In his book *Make Your Bed* Admiral McRaven describes his experience going through Navy Seal Training. At anytime anyone wanted out of the training he said all that they had to do was go to the center of the camp and ring a bell and that would bring their training to an end. Deny the cross for the Christian is kind of like ringing the bell because we are called to love and true love requires us to sacrifice our wants and desires for the good of another.

**Religion, too, requires a sacrifice; it is not a crutch, but a cross.**

Carl Marx, the founder of communism, called "religion the opium of the masses." He believed that religion inspired people, especially the poor, to simply accept things as they are. I wondered if Carl Marx ever really knew a Catholic or had ever really studied the history of the world. The Catholic Faith is in no way a drug that encourages people to accept the status quo. It is rather a force that motivates Catholics to think beyond themselves and to change the world.

At one time, the Roman Empire was a place filled with much evil. For example, the Romans practiced infanticide. When a child reached the age of eight days, he or she would be presented to his or her father. If the father literally turned his back on the child, the child would be tossed out into the alley to die of exposure. This great evil eventually disappeared from the Roman Empire because of the Catholic Church's teachings on the value of life.

According to some historians, the city of Rome at one time had more slaves living in it than free people. Eventually slavery also disappeared from the Roman Empire because of the Catholic Church's teaching of love for one's enemies and that all people were made in the divine image.

One last example, at one time the Roman Empire was filled with gladiatorial games where men were forced to fight against wild animals or worse each other in order to survive and sadly this was also considered some crude form of entertainment. These games too were eventually banished because of Catholic moral teaching.

The Catholic Faith has inspired countless people throughout the ages to make the world a better place. Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day, and Damian Molokai, are just a few saints who spent their life making the world a better place and, in the process, they inspired countless others to follow their example.

An honest look at the daily life of any Catholic Parish reveals quickly that the Catholic Church is not designed for those who do not want to get involved. Every parish provides its parishioners with hundreds of opportunities to volunteer

and make their world a better place, for example serving the poor through the Saint Vincent DePaul Society, teaching children how to play sports through the Athletic Association, inspiring children through the religious education program, going on mission trips, and frying fish for fish fries are just a few of the many activities Catholics are encouraged to get involved in. Catholic Relief Services is the largest international aid service in the world today.

**One leans on a crutch, but a cross rests on us. A coward can use a crutch, but it takes a hero to embrace a cross.**

Married couples who stay together through many ups and downs are heroes. Teenagers who remain chaste like God calls them to are heroes. We also have what I would call redeemed heroes divorced couples who treat each other with respect can be a redeemed hero. Women who find themselves with unwanted pregnancy that choose life can be a redeemed hero. Moses was a redeemed hero. He was a murderer who fled and left his people in slavery but God gave him a second chance. Paul (Saul) was a redeemed hero. He was a murderer and a persecutor of Christians and yet God did not abandon him.

**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**

**June 28, 2020**

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**No one can prevent the sun from shining, but every man can pull down the blinds and shut it out.**

One of the most important things that I learned in the seminary was the idea that faith was that there were going to be some people that I was not going to be able to convert no matter how well thought out and delivered my best argument was. In addition to know why I believe in God and why I think another should believe in God, it is important for me to try to figure out why a person chooses "to pull down the blinds and shut God out." Building a relationship through listening can help a person raise their blinds and let the light of faith in.

**Pride is the exaltation of self as an absolute standard of truth, goodness, and morality. It judges everything by itself, and for the reason everyone else is a rival, particularly God. Pride makes it impossible to know God. If I know everything, then not even God can teach me anything. If I am filled with myself, then there is no place for God. Like the inns of Bethlehem, we say to the divine visitor: "There is no room."**

Pride is the most deadly of the seven deadly sins because it distorts reality the most. Instead of placing God at the center of the universe, pride places us at the center of the universe. When a student thinks he knows more than a teacher he is less likely to learn. In the same way when we think we know more God we are less likely to do things God's way. Humility the opposite of pride is admitting that we are not the center of the universe or the smartest being in the universe.

**Pride is of two kinds: it is either the pride of omniscience or the pride of nescience. The pride of omniscience tries to convince your neighbor you know everything; the new pride of nescience tries to convince your neighbor that he knows nothing.**

Pride instead of building relationships, separates us from others as we build a wall of intellectual nonsense in order to make others inferior.

**He is saying that if He remained on earth, we could never get any closer to Him than the touch of a hand, or the sound of a voice, or the thrill of an embrace, which is far below the degree of intimacy that God wants with the soul, and the soul desires with God. But if He ascended into heaven and sent to us His Spirit, then He would not be an example to be copied, but a veritable life to be lived. Then His mind would be our mind; His Life, our life.**

I had the opportunity to hold the holy water for St. John Paul II when he came to St. Louis in 1999. It was an amazing experience. The experience of holding the holy water for John Paul II did not lead to a personal relationship with him

partly because I never got that close to him again. If Jesus was still on earth, imagine how hard it would be for us to build a relationship with him.

**How thankful we should be to Our Dear Lord for saving us as members of His Mystical Body from the terrible menace of authoritarianism. He does it three ways: (1) because in the Church the basis of our obedience is not fear but a person; (2) because in the Church the basis of our obedience is not fear but love; and (3) because in the Church our freedom of thought is saved from narrowness by knowing both sides of the Question.**

Many people are afraid that God is some sort of dictator. Fulton Sheen points out here that God is going out of His way to create a way for us to enter into a relationship with Him.

**A saint can be defined as one who has a divine sense of humor, for a saint never takes this world seriously as the lasting city. To him the world is like a scaffolding up through which souls climb to the kingdom of heaven, and when the last soul shall have climbed up through it, then it shall be torn down and burned with a fervent fire, not because it was base, but because it has done its work—it has brought souls back again to God.**