

For Sunday, October 29, 2017

Moving Closer to the Center

30th Sunday of Ordinary Time

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/102917.cfm>

Exodus 22:20-26

1 Thessalonians 1:5C-10

Matthew 22:34-40

There are familiar themes in today's Gospel: love of God and love of neighbor. But how are these one and the same reality? Allow some wisdom from a [Desert Father](#), [Dorotheos of Gaza](#), to explain:

Suppose we were to take a compass and insert the point and draw the outline of a circle. The center point is the same distance from any point on the circumference. For the sake of the example, let's suppose that this circle is the world, and that God is the center; the straight lines drawn from the circumference to the center are the lives of men. To the degree that the saints enter into the things of the Spirit, they desire to come near to God; and in proportion to their progress in the things of the Spirit, they do in fact come close to God and to their neighbor. The closer they are to God, they closer they become to one another, and the closer they are to one another, the closer they are to God! Now consider in the same context the question of separation; for when they stand away from God... it is clear that the more they recede and become distant from God, the more they become distant from one another. See! This is the very nature of love. The more we turn away from and do not love God, the greater the distance that separates us from our neighbor. If we were to love God more, we should be closer to God, and through love of Him, we should be more united in love to our neighbor; and the more we are united to our neighbor, the more we are united to God.



I like the example of the bicycle wheel because it gives me a visual illustration that I understand! Permit me to give you a few questions to reflect upon based upon this:

1. Who are the people in your life that encouraged you to discover your latent potential? What were those circumstances? How did you feel afterwards? To whom did you return the favor?
2. Who are the people in your life that assisted you to discover your hidden identity ... that helped you discover your 'niche' – your humanness? What were those circumstances? How did you feel afterwards? To whom did you return the favor?

Here's the real question to reflectively ponder: what is the subtle difference between the above two questions? Or, more poignantly, how would you like to be eulogized, from a speech based on question 1 or from question 2?

In a culture that is built upon appearances and accomplishments, marketing strategies and return on investments, on [immediate gratification](#), and instant communication; in a culture that is [marked by all sorts of social and political hostilities](#) and economic and [technological advancement](#), we can feel lost in this blizzard of moving cogs because subconsciously we realize that something is missing from our lives even though our schedules are full and our “life is good.” It is good to “do” things; certainly, life has much to offer. But often, “doing” comes at the expense of “becoming.” We can exhaust ourselves “doing” things with others, but we often don’t think of helping people find their humanity.

When that season of life dawns on you and you begin to wrestle with the deeper questions about life, “*when you cry out*” to God when your employment is terminated unexpectedly, when your portfolio crashes, when your daughter goes through a divorce, when your child contracts a terminal illness, when natural tragedy strikes your city, when you no longer feel comfortable at your successful job, when you helplessly watch you son make poor life choices, when you’re not sure how you are going to pay bills next month, when your wife has a miscarriage, when you struggle to find a reason to get out of bed in the morning, when addiction to pleasures have overrun your life, when life shifts your perspective from the ephemeral to the essential, perhaps you will begin to see the wisdom of Dorotheos: *all that matters in life is to have loved God and loved your neighbor*. Today, ask yourself: Is a life like that even possible today? If so, how can you live it?

Br. John Marmion Villa

PRAYER

Dear God,
May I love you above all things.
May I love you in all things.
May I love as you love
and forgive as you forgive.
Teach me to seek your face
and to see your face in every person I meet.
In my desire to see you, may I find you.
In my desire to love others, may I love you.
Draw all your children together,
closer to the center of your love.
Amen.

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