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#112

For the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost -- Romans 8:26-34

The Faith of a Child

*For we do not know how to pray
as we ought ... — Romans 8:26*

As the child walked through the toy store her eyes became wide with excitement and wonder . She was the contest winner and in a short time would have five minutes to gather as many toys as she could. All the toys gathered in that time period would be hers.

The more she looked the more confused she became . With everything to choose from she didn't know where to start or what to pick. She started to panic and become afraid that when the time came she would freeze and not be able to pick anything .

Her mother recognized the girl's anxiety and tried to calm her and give her advice on what to gather . The girl's mother knew what would be good for her , what would be educational , what would be fun, what would be safe, and what would be unsafe. The girl's mother knew what was best for her daughter , and her help and advice was instrumental in the girl's gathering of many fine toys. The daughter , having put complete trust in her mother's advice, was not disappointed.

[In the eighth chapter of his Letter to the Romans , Paul tells us that our prayer life is similar to that child in the toy store trying to decide what toys to choose . We have many weaknesses and shortcomings, and often we don't know what to pray for. There are also two things that prevent us from praying as we should. First , we cannot peer into the future - and we sometimes pray for things

which in the long run may cause us harm. Second, in any given situation we really don't know what is best for us. God, like the child's mother in the toy store, knows what is in our best interest, what is safe for us, and what will do us harm.

Paul knew that it was impossible for our human intelligence to know what to pray for . He tells us that if we love God, we will be called to his purpose, and God will do many good things in our life. It is the experience of life for Christians that all things work together for good. We can all look back in our own lives and remember things we thought were disasters, but which worked out for the best -- times when we were disappointed and later realized that we had been blessed.

God wants to do what is best for us, so in the time to come let us put our destinies in his hands. If we love , trust , and accept God's will for us, our lives will be blessed and all things will work together for our good. When we pray, let us say simply "Father , into your hands I commend my spirit . Not my will, but yours, be done." Just as the mother did not disappoint her daughter in the toy store, God most certainly will not let us down. o

Br . Edward Munro is a sergeant with the Fairfax County (Virginia) Fire Department . He serves at Mount Calvary Church in Baltimore , and is a volunteer at the Joseph Richey House , a hospice for dying people who have no one to care for them .

Founder's Forum Joyful Separation

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted -- Matthew 5:4

On Sunday, May 17, 1987, the Rev. J. Norman Hall went home to God; the God he had served for years and years -- and 26 of those as rector of St. Bartholomew's Church, White Plains, NY -- called his servant home. Only two years ago my own father died in June. Both of these men were important in my life. This is an offering of reflection.

Shortly before his death, the late Edward Madison Cameron, in delightful and whimsical fashion, delivered a lecture to his aging body, from which he was about to part. He said "When you can go no further, I shall leave you and be free. When we separate I shall continue to exist A power greater than you or I started us on our journey. Your journey is approaching its end and you are aware of it. My journey has merely begun, and I know it because I have never been more alive. Our separation is therefore not one of sadness but one of joy. You are

weary and want to stop. I am longing to alight from this slowing vehicle and go on without you."

The man who wrote the above succeeded in freeing himself from the bondage of his suffering. He had found peace in God and in God's caring for him, even to the end of his earthly life. He was adjusted to "the things unseen" and those that are eternal.

We often say things like "it's a blessing" and "he or she is finally at peace." If our faith means anything at all, it means that we really do not mourn for those who have become themselves in eternity, but rather we mourn for ourselves. We can rejoice for them in their freedom.

*Enable us to rejoice in hope when death invades the circle of our loved ones, O God, for your goodness endures for ever and ever, and your mercy to the ends of the earth.
Amen. -- RTB*

Here and there with the Brotherhood COMMUNITY NOTES

GOFFSTOWN NH

Br. Christian Williams has been appointed assistant musician at St. Matthew's parish. He recently attended a diocesan clergy and musician workshop.

BOSTON MA

Br. Laurence Andrew Keller survived Holy Week and Easter in the demanding position of sacristan at the Church of the Advent. He has been appointed as chairman of missions for the diocesan altar guild. +++ Br. Bernard Fessenden works at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, and in addition is doing part time work with drug addicts. He is on the

pastoral services team at St. John the Evangelist, Bowdoin Street, and has been assisting the Rev. Hugh Weaver at the evening eucharist at Trinity, Copley Square. On Holy Saturday he attended the reception of Paul Delmolino into the Antiochian Orthodox Church. +++ Br. Donovan Aidan Bowley attended the first profession of vows of Br. Eldridge Pendleton, SSJE, at the Cambridge monastery. He was also at the monastery for a benefit held to raise funds for *El Hogar de Amor y Esperanza* orphanage and St. Mary's Technical Institute in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. +++ Br. Matthew Staples attended the opening events for the centennial year of St. Monica's Home

for Aged Women, in Roxbury. He also attended an ecumenical AIDS healing service at the historic Arlington Street Church.

STOUGHTON MA

Brs. Roy Tobin and Matthew attended Br. Luke Anthony Nowicki's last Sunday service at Trinity Church, at which Luke was preacher. After seven years in this parish, his presence will be sorely missed.

NEWTON MA

Brs. Roy, Donovan Aidan, Matthew and postulant Ciaran Anthony Della Fera paid a visit to the Church of the Messiah. After the eucharist the brothers met members of the congregation and shared in the coffee-hour.

WHITE PLAINS NY

The Brotherhood Council has voted to make its first quarter Community Tithing Grant, in the amount of \$672, to Starcross Community, for their "Morning Glory Project" which cares for infants infected with HIV (the AIDS virus) who have been abandoned by their mothers. +++ The Superior General, Br. Richard Thomas Biernacki, was organist at the requiem eucharist for the Rev. J. Norman Hall.

BRONX NY

Br. William Bunting was organist for the Wednesday evening Lenten services at St. Andrew's, Castle Hill Avenue. He also gave a series of talks on the history of the B.C.P.

NEW YORK CITY

Brs. James E. Teets and Tobias Stanislas Haller were elected to the board of the Catholic Fellowship of the Episcopal Church, a society dedicated to the nurture of catholic tradition in Anglicanism, which recognized the authority of the General Convention to articulate doctrine, discipline and worship. The annual meeting concluded with dinner and an address by guest speaker Br. John-Charles, SSF. +++ The brothers who work in Manhattan have been formed into two 'deaneries' by Br. William, provincial. The groups gather for lunch in the Wall Street and Midtown areas. +++ Br. James had an enjoyable discussion with Archbishop of Edmonton E. Kent Clark, who has been on sabbatical at General Seminary, when the Archbishop attended Eastertide services at St. Luke in the Fields. Archbishop Clark

serves on the Anglican Church of Canada's House of Bishops Committee on Religious Communities. +++ Br. John Peter Clark has become a member of the program committee of St. Augustine's. The committee oversees all programs of the parish.

WASHINGTON DC

Brs. Edward Munro and Thaddeus David Williams attended the national Acolyte Festival at the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul. In the afternoon they visited the friary of the Holy Land Commissariat Franciscans.

SUNBURY PA

Br. Edward visited Thaddeus David's parish, St. Matthew's, preached and administered the chalice at the eucharist. The brothers did a short presentation on the community at the parish breakfast.

NEWBURY PA

Br. Thaddeus David represented the Episcopal Church in a COCU service held at St. John's United Methodist Church.

CINCINNATI OH

Br. Thomas Joseph Ross is attending a seminar in Oxford, England. Brother preached his first sermon earlier this year, at the noon Maundy Thursday eucharist at Christ Church.

CHICAGO IL

Novice Br. Edward Ram6n Riley planned a preaching mission for a visiting Gregorian friar in Pentecost. Br. Laurence Andrew preached at All Saints (where Br. Edward Ram6n is rector), St. Peter's and the Church of the Atonement.

MADISON WI

Br. Bernard Francis LaReau is working with Canon Downing in planning a program of Christian education for the Cadel Deanery, a part of the Diocese of Milwaukee. He has been visiting each parish, gathering information on the programs in each, and will be an advisor in planning programs for the deanery.

PORTLAND OR

Br. Kevin James Jensen took part in a *Cinco de Mayo* celebration at the Cathedral of St. John. He reports that 'singing hymns to a *mariachi* band accompaniment was an enjoyable experience.' o

The current debate on the subject of sexual morality has, in many instances, shown the Church at its worst. Some have pointed out that if the Church would spend more time performing the works of mercy it wouldn't find itself with so much time to spend on works of judgment. But once the issue of sexuality has been raised, it seems difficult to put down. Why is the combination of sex and religion such an attractive subject?

Sexuality and religion are intensely personal, but at the same time interpersonal. This does not mean, however, that certain facts cannot be established by honest seekers after even limited truth -- which is the best we can hope for. It is the depth of our honesty, coupled with the breadth of our charity, that can lead us to accept as right and true that which might offend or go against a deeply felt emotion, or a long held belief. The ability to let go, to accept in humility that others might be closer to the truth, must be maintained in this debate.

The Presiding Bishop said this in a recent letter to all bishops "Let us approach these delicate subjects in sufficient humility and prayer to recognize that this Truth is still leading us, and not vice versa. We dare not close our hearts and minds to the work of the Holy Spirit, which is constantly renewing us and leading us into all truth."

The greatest danger for the Church in the discussion of human sexuality is the ease with which a "Pharisee and Publican" scenario develops. The process by which this happens begins when *behavior* itself is identified as being sinful. This is not only non-Christian, but non-Jewish. The Tenth Commandment ("Thou shalt not covet") and the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:20-48) have confounded jurists and agnostics for centuries. In Judaism and Christianity, the simple rule of ethical behavior, which forbids certain *acts*, is augmented by a higher moral law in which

it is not enough just "not to kill, not to commit adultery ..." but in which one must not hate, must not lust, must not *desire* wrongly. For the Christian and the Jew, there may be victimless crimes, but there are no victim-less *sins*.

It is far easier to talk about "committing a sin" than to accept the fact that we are "sinful." We cannot define sexuality, sinful or otherwise, solely in terms of genital expression. By categorizing certain behaviors as sins it becomes very simple to justify oneself. When behavior alone is the criterion, it becomes painfully easy to stand in judgment: "I thank God I'm not one of *them!*" is a cry of self-justification through the judgment of others.

A second danger lurks behind the pious phrase, "We should hate the sin but love the sinner." How does one separate the two, if sin involves more than behavior, as both the Law and Jesus maintain? Christ tells us that we should *love* the sinner and *forgive* the sin. He told the woman "I do not condemn you; sin no more." (John 8:11) It is certainly true that if a desire or behavior is sinful, it should not be condoned or encouraged. But it is also impossible to "hate the sin" apart from the sinner, as if sin had some objective reality apart from the desires and actions of fallen human beings. Those who begin by hating the sin soon come to hating the sinner. When those who legislate what is sinful have sufficient power, we have seen what results: the *auto da fe* was intended to save the souls of those repentant heretics being burned alive.

The third danger in all this talk of sin is that many have naturally assumed that it is very clear precisely what is sinful and what isn't. In upcoming articles, we will attempt to examine the scriptural basis for these attitudes. o

-- The Editor