

CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for catholic cadets)

Week of 3 March, 2002

To my Catholic brothers and sisters in the Corps:

Last Friday we had the National Prayer Breakfast at The West Point Club.

The speaker was LTG Robert Flowers...Commanding General of Engineers...friend of the Supe...a strong Catholic.

He ended his talk by sharing with the audience a prayer he had written.

I thought it was beautiful...reflecting the care that any leader should have about the men and women who are being "led".

I wanted to share it with you:

Today I spoke with my soldiers.
I talked to them, of history, life, honor,
death, drugs,
of being airborne and loving your country.
I talked to them,
and, dear Lord, they're beautiful.

They're vital, filled with spirit and questions,
brimming with conflicts and hope...
searching for answers,
clawing down the walls around their leaders.

And finding what?

They're beautiful, Jesus,
nakedly honest,,frightening in insight.
I looked into their faces,
and it becomes an examination of conscience.

Have I failed them?
Have I betrayed them?
Have I talked an ideal which I haven't lived?
Do they know?
Yes, they know.

They're trying to live an ideal,
and they stand before me holding a mirror.
It seems at times they listened with skepticism and doubt.
When they talk,
they accuse, and I feel guilty.
A wall separates us, and I am afraid

they are penetrating the facade,
so I lash out to criticize them.

Jesus, I need them.
I need their questions to become my questions.
I need their hope to rekindle my own.
I need their concern to dispel mine.

And they need me.
They need my support...not my suppression.
They need my faith...not my scoffing.
They need my experience...not my scoffing.

Dear Jesus...we need each other.
We need to keep talking.
Only in You is there hope.
Help me, O Lord...when the distance seems so great
and my soldiers seem so far away...
through Your love...to close the gap.

That says it all, I think.
Hope the words got to you as they got to me.

THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

CATHOLIC CADET PRAYER BREAKFAST
will be held on Thursday, 14 March, at 0615 at The
West Point Club.
More information to follow.

LENTEN RECONCILIATION
Opportunity for Personal Confession at the Parish
Reconciliation Service on 19 March at the Chapel.
Confessions are also heard each Saturday at 1630
at the Chapel...or stop in the Chaplain's Office
anytime during the week.

DAILY MASS
Mass is offered every weekday (except Saturdays and
holidays) in the Catholic Chaplain's Office at 0630.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS
Every Friday of Lent, there will be the STATIONS
OF THE CROSS at the Chapel. Each week, the
Ceremony will be followed by a simple supper of soup

to keep the spirit of FASTING.

QUIET PRAYER

Each Wednesday of LENT, the Blessed Sacrament is present in the Catholic Chaplain's Office from 1830 to 1930. Anyone who wants to stop in for quiet prayer is welcome.

LENTEN LECTURE SERIES

Every Tuesday evening of LENT at 1900 at the Chapel, there will be a Lecture Series, given by Fr. Don Timone, of Mt. St. Mary's College. Everyone is welcome.

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the classic Lenten devotions is THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS on Fridays in Lent.

Traditionally, Lenten worship has drawn attention to the sufferings and death of Jesus, and THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS ask the participants to do precisely that: to WALK WITH CHRIST along the final journey of his life and to commemorate the things that happened to him along the way.

The word STATION literally means "a standing still", and during the time of the Crusades (AD 1095 to 1270), it became popular for pilgrims to the Holy Land to follow the route that Jesus took on his way to be crucified on Calvary. These pilgrims walked the streets of Jerusalem in large numbers and stopped (or STOOD STILL) at various points along the way to pray and meditate on the various things that happened to Jesus on that very first Good Friday.

They remembered events that were mentioned in Scripture (eg, Simon of Cyrene helping Jesus to carry the cross - Mark 15:21; or Jesus meeting some sympathetic women of Jerusalem - Luke 23:27), and they also thought about events that had become part of the tradition of the journey (eg, a woman wiping the blood from the face of Christ). They used these prayers and meditations as a means of entering into the whole spirit of Jesus' sufferings and death.

Following the Crusades, when the Muslims recaptured the Holy Land, it became too dangerous for Christians to continue the practice - or even to travel to Jerusalem, so the custom of observing STATIONS OF THE CROSS in the cities and towns of Europe took the place of the pilgrimage overseas. It was a substitute that became a popular outdoor devotion through Europe during the Middle Ages.

People represented the critical events from Scripture or tradition about Jesus' journey to the cross (as was previously done in Jerusalem) by life-size statues, and the number of these STATIONS varied from five to as many as twenty.

In the 18th century, Pope Clement XII fixed the number at fourteen, and in the mid-18th century, the whole event was eventually moved inside churches.

When that happened, the devotion developed from real-life re-creations of the particular events to pictures on the walls of churches, and people were asked to use their imaginations to re-create the events of Good Friday. So the STATIONS became a much more meditative and private devotion.

Nowadays, most Catholic churches have the fourteen pictures of the final agonies of Jesus on the walls, and many Catholics find this to be a good way to focus on the meaning of Lent.

In the 1960s, it became popular to add a 15th STATION: the Resurrection of Christ. This represented the real "end" or "goal" of his original journey and reminded people that the only point of Jesus' suffering and death was the triumph of his Resurrection.

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS are observed at Most Holy Trinity on each Friday evening of Lent at 1800, and everyone who is free is most welcome to be a part of this weekly devotion.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

...the grandmother of a cadet ('02), who died last week.

...all those who will be celebrating 100th Night this weekend, especially those who will be traveling.

...all our military brothers and sisters - and their families - throughout the world, especially those in areas of risk.

...all those who have been casualties in Asia and the Philippines over the last several weeks, and their families.

GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Father, my roommate is Muslim, and she and I were having a discussion about our beliefs. I tend not to think of "God" and "Allah" as being the same. On the other hand, she does. I had never really thought about it before, but to me, the two were always separate. Could you please clarify?

A: Thanks for the question. It's an important one, and especially today, when there's so much misunderstanding about Islam in the West.

In 1965, the Second Vatican Council issued a policy-statement called "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions". At the time, it was a very important statement because it reversed a lot of opinions about what the Catholic Church really believed, and it asked Catholics to eliminate any attitudes of bias or prejudice from their religious attitudes.

Part of that declaration dealt with Islam, and I'd like to quote the whole passage for you and your roommate:

Upon the Muslims, too, the Church looks with esteem. They adore one God, living and enduring, merciful and all-powerful, Maker of heaven and earth and Speaker to men and women. They strive to submit wholeheartedly even to His inscrutable decrees, just as did Abraham, with whom the Islamic faith is pleased to associate itself. Though they

do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, his virgin mother; at times, the call on her too with devotion. In addition, they await the Day of Judgement when God will give each person his or her due after raising him and her up. Consequently, they prize the moral life and give worship to God, especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Although in the course of centuries, many quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslims, this Council urges all to forget the past and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding. On behalf of all men and women, let everyone make common cause of safeguarding peace and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom.

Nostra Aetate #3

And to answer your specific question, the Christian "God" and the Muslim "Allah" are two names for the same Reality. If you were to do some research into the subject, you'd find that Christians, Muslims and Jews were always called "People of the Book". That meant that they drew many of their beliefs from the common traditions of what Christians call the Old Testament.

Abraham - whose story is told in the earliest pages of Genesis (beginning with Chapter 12) - is considered the father of the Jews AND the Arabs and consequently of the Jewish faith and the Muslim faith.

And because the Christian New Testament is spiritually linked with the Old Testament, Christians consider Abraham their "father in faith" as well.

So Christians have a lot in common with the faith of Islam.

But you're right: most of the time, it never occurs to us that what we easily consider "differences" might not be differences at all.

And this is true with the terms "Allah" and "God"; they're simply two different words for the same Reality - the One God, merciful and compassionate.

I hope this gives you two some thoughts to discuss.

Glad you asked the question.

THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

HOLINESS:

This past week, a cadet sent me the following passage from a book he was reading:

The word "holy" means "to separate".

The ancestry of the word can be traced back to an ancient word which means "to cut". To be holy, then, is to be a cut above the norm, superior, extraordinary...

The Holy One dwells on a different level from the rest of us.

What frightens us does not frighten him.

What troubles us does not trouble him...

We use the word a lot, but I wonder whether we think about what HOLY really implies.

So let's look briefly at how Catholic spirituality looks at the concept of HOLINESS... taken from "The New Catholic Dictionary of Spirituality":

Holiness is defined as the state of being set apart for religious purposes or being consecrated for God. The word "holiness" is derived from the Old English word "halignes", meaning "without blemish or injury". HOLY, then, is an English equivalent for the Hebrew word "qds" and the Greek "hagios", with both the Hebrew and the Greek having the added sense of SEPARATION or CONSECRATION.

Rudolf Otto's classic study "The Idea of the Holy" describes the HOLY as that which is TOTALLY OTHER, engendering both awe and fascination. The HOLY is absolutely different; it is "mystery"...

The Bible predicates the word HOLY or HOLINESS in the first fundamental instance of God. God is SEPARATE in the sense that God is not to be identified with creation or creature. The great hymns of praise of both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures emphasize the OTHERNESS and SINGULARITY of God.

In his great hymn (Exodus 15:11), Moses asks:

Who is like to you, magnificent in HOLINESS,
O terrible in renown, worker of wonders...?

And in the vision of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:3), angelic hosts stand between the Temple and God, singing:

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts...

and the New Testament borrows this hymn in Revelation 4:8 as its own description of the majesty of God.

Borrowing the language of the Bible, Jesus calls the Father "holy" (John 17:11) and instructs the disciples in prayer to "hallow (ie, make HOLY) his name" (Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2).

When the Bible speaks of "the Holy One", it is a synonym for God, as in the prophecy of Habakkuk 3:3:

God comes from Teman,
the Holy One from Mount Paran...

HOLINESS becomes an extended quality by reason of proximity to God. Thus, the ground surrounding the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:5) becomes HOLY because of the presence of God, as do other sites where God has appeared, such as Bethel (Genesis 28:11ff) and, preeminently, the Temple in Jerusalem...

In general, we can say that the places, people, rites, etc., that are called HOLY receive that appellation because they participate in the OTHERNESS of God.

HOLINESS derives from God as a divine quality that is shared:

But as he who called you is HOLY,
be HOLY yourselves in every aspect of your conduct,

for it is written: 'Be HOLY because I am HOLY'.

I Peter 1:15-16

(See Leviticus 11:44-45)

The Bible allows us, then, to understand three strands of understanding
HOLINESS:

- 1) a PRIESTLY understanding that emphasizes separation, purity and segregation for worship purposes;
- 2) a PROPHETIC understanding that underscores the relationship between worship, social justice and the human heart;
- 3) a SAPIENTIAL holiness that puts emphasis on the need for INDIVIDUAL INTEGRITY as it develops under the eye of God.

HOLINESS is an actual CALLING. It is a move away from that which is not God toward that which makes us closer to God after the manner of Jesus.

And the HOLINESS of believers finds its model in Jesus Christ, who mirrors the HOLINESS of God.

UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

"The amount of humor
that a person gets out of the world
depends on the size of the world
in which he or she lives."

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

And that's the way it is, a day like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our time...

and YOU ARE THERE!!

That's all for now.
Have a great weekend,
especially if you're celebrating 100th Night.
You're all in my prayers constantly.

Woodie