

Post-Advent Resolutions for a New Year & Lent

A sequel to *Handouts* n. 20: What am I giving up for Lent? Sin!

DISCIPLINING SELF

One aspect of disciplining is *discipling* — making ourselves and others disciples of Christ, His learners and followers, by the virtues. In our fallen state, even with Baptismal grace, we need to combat our instinctive waywardness with **mortification**, Latin for *making dead*, i.e. 'killing off whatever hinders virtue.

First stage mortification is of our **BODILY** powers.

- Discipline the **tongue** to serve the cause of right by positive speech. For instance, building up a father's authority rather than disparaging it, or letting it die of disuse, dried up and withered. No negative speech at all, except to introduce the positive, like clearing debris for the sake of rebuilding, or cutting out the cancer before it spreads.
- Discipline the **feelings** to make oneself do what one does not feel like; e.g. early 'roosting' at night for the sake of rising early for God, to pray properly before breakfast.
- Discipline the **eyes** — traditionally called custody of the eyes — for avoiding distractions at Mass; and especially for men tempted by a woman's curves, and women stirred to vanities.
- Discipline the **ears** to favour goodness, to block out detractions, calumnies, crudities and coarseness, and to shun soporific electronic sound which reduces sensitivity, and desensitizes us with God and man.
- Discipline the **hands** to keep them off others, e.g. males not risking self-arousal or arousing females.

BLAMING OR FIXING?

Second stage mortification concerns **ATTITUDES**:-

St Dorotheus said, "Disputes arise because no one blames himself..." Thus Mr Negative, full of his usual and unrestrained aggression, rants, "Who's to blame? Who did *that*?" pointing a quivering finger.

Mr Positive replies firmly, "Let's put out the fire first — before it burns the building down" [or before the consequences of whatever other disaster has just happened] "and **then** we can work out who or what to blame. But first things first!"

- "The first thing to do is not to do any harm."
 - "See! Judge! Act!"
 - "Lead, follow, or get out of the way!"
 - Blaming to achieve repentance, reparation, repairs is a virtuous act; and sometimes the blameworthy must be *removed* in order to fix things. But that's all.
- Other attitudes** needing mortification are:-
- answering-back out of pride, or not taking correction;
 - being slack about the growth of goodness in oneself;
 - hindering the growth of goodness in others;
 - shyness ranging through to cowardliness;
 - mistaking meekness for what is in fact weakness;
 - putting people down — domineering, bossy-boots;
 - unforgiving angry accusations, naggingly repeated;
 - psychological blackmail by bad temper.

"PUNCTUOSITY"

Punctuosity is PUNCTUALITY + PREPAREDNESS. It means not being late nor coming unready for action.

Punctuality is motivated by consideration for others and to save wasting their time.

It is NOT achieved BY ADDITION: we **must not keep packing in extra items** that wishful thinking says we *might* just squeeze in before zero hour, whether it's a rendezvous, a meeting, meal or Mass, or our own or someone else's deathbed, or catching planes, trains and buses running to a timetable. A priority once chosen dispenses with Kipling's "fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run".

Punctuality is achieved by subtraction: **working backwards from the zero hour**, by subtracting off: (1) the time estimated for the journey; (2) the time to get in and out of the car; (3) the time taken to "get organized", e.g. wash, dress; (4) some extra minutes as insurance for anything going wrong.

Punctuosity uses the scholastic adage: **what is first in intention is last in execution**. We plan how to fit in all the necessary things, and in correct sequence, so that we achieve our goal. Then we allow nothing to displace or negative either it or them.

SELF-ESTEEM

William Coulson, a Catholic psycho-guru, foisted self-esteem on Religious Orders and schools. As a consequence of his zeal, many **people fell to bits**. Finally, he saw the light, recanted, and toured the world "beating his breast" and working to clean up his mess.

Self-esteem as such is not wrong: it's akin to self-respect. It's the *promotion* of it, yapping about it, prioritizing it, that is damaging. Like self-fulfilment, like happiness and humility: you only get it by not seeking it, so we forget ourselves and **do our duty**, to:-

- God, by adoration;
- self, by saving our souls;
- others, by justice and charity.

"Then all other things will be added unto us."

VIGILANCE

Parents do not let unsupervised strangers loose in their lounge rooms, let alone in children's bed rooms. Parental leadership makes sure that certain things do NOT happen — so beware of **stranger-danger** with:-

- Immoral, or even amoral, companions and reading;
- TV etc: shows, news, commercials, (sport is safer);
- cruising the internet and getting hooked on lust.

Practical advice:

- Get children to **talk** about their friends and books;
- the monitor/screen/display **MUST** be in **public view**;
- restrict access by **time-tabling, passwords, blocks**;
- have programs of **asceticism** and **mortification**.

"The Devil goes about like a roaring lion, whom resist ye, steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8) — Jungle Warfare's motto is "**Constant vigilance and eternal suspicion**".

BUILD UP ALTAR BOYS and start up the DAUGHTERS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Vatican II rejected unisex and insisted on two sexes:

Above all, they [teachers] should work in close co-operation with the parents. In the entire educational programme they should, together with the parents, make full allowance for the difference of sex and for the particular role which Providence has appointed to each sex in the family and in society.

Gravissimum Educationis (Christian Education) §8

Since God has different plans for the sexes in family and society, we expect the Church also to make proper allowance for that difference, in the Church generally and on the sanctuary in particular. So we promote the complementarity of boys and girls at Mass.

Note how the advocates of altar girls are usually soft on the issue of women priests. Moreover, their own psycho-sexual development may have been retarded by the feminist philosophy of unisex. See Appendix 3 in *Bush Boys on the Move*, on a father's role in the formation of his sons.

The new Daughters of the Blessed Virgin:-

- will be akin to the old Children of Mary sodality;
- grouped in front seats — multiple teams in turn;
- wearing white dresses, sashes and veils;
- with a group prayer recited before and after Mass;
- arrange flowers for altar and sanctuary;
- act as welcomers for strangers and giving out notices;
- perhaps baking altar breads?
- perhaps laundering altar linen?
- sacristans? (but beware of demarcation disputes).

OCCUPATION: PARENT!

The spiritual motherhood of consecrated women Religious is *even more noble* than motherhood as such. It is an espousal to the Lord Jesus, a spiritual marriage.

Motherhood is itself **more noble** than any profession or paid work open to woman. So be counter-cultural and get girls' schools to promote motherhood.

The spiritual fatherhood of consecrated male Religious and priests as an espousal to the Church, a spiritual marriage, is *even more noble* than fatherhood as such.

Fatherhood is itself **more noble** than the profession or paid occupation by which a father fulfills his basic duty as breadwinner for wife and children.

His priorities are:

- **wife and children**, so work is a means to an end;
- **work** should also build a better world for all families;
- **self-fulfilment** for himself is a bi-product of work.

Self-esteemists put fulfilment first; careerists put work first; both to the detriment of the Divine plan.

The Catholic world-view, the basic backdrop to life, is that people are put here on earth for a **testing time**. Will they imitate the goodwill of God, or not? God put people here on earth to **populate Heaven with saints**, and most often by being fathers and mothers.

Family flows from marriage. Marriage needs the complementarity of the sexes. Every human vocation requires virtues, indeed, holiness.

SELF-TESTING

- Do I laugh at myself — humbled by my stupidities?
- Am I patient in listening to people?
- Do I resent hearing advice for my improvement?
- Do I resent any advice at all?
- Do I make myself do what's right against my feelings?
- Am I patient with people acting/speaking foolishly?
- Do I admit to myself and others when I am wrong?
- Do I forgive those who offend me?
- Do I wallow in resentments and self-pity?
- How much humility do others need to bear with me?
- Do they need *shock absorbers* for my aggression?

HOW'S MY RECIPROCITY?

Christ's precepts and parables insist on our practicing reciprocity in love/mercy/forgiveness/service etc. Therefore:

- Am I over-sensitive to hurt yet insensitive to others? (i.e. thin-skinned for self yet thick-skinned for others)
- Am I a teacher who won't let myself be taught?
- or a formator who won't let myself be formed? (or healer, improver, sanctifier etc)
- or a ruler of others, but unruly myself?

HIDDEN CORRUPTION OF THE SACRED

Today's weakening of words inhibits the thinking of ideas vital for religious thought and action:-

- **AWFUL** (originally **AWEFUL**), like dreadful and terrible, used to convey a vital aspect of *holy fear*:
Terrible is this place: it is none other than the House of God and the Gate of Heaven.

Genesis 28:17

- **AWESOME** held out longer, but in recent years has become a popular description of things which are no more than simply 'stunning'. Contrast the *Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition* on God (p. 16):-

...the Holy One, a mystery awesome and wondrous

These words have been devalued to mean nothing more than 'outrageous', and often in its quite trivial sense of 'dislike'.

St Paul's warning against popular culture still stands: ...preach the Good News, and not to preach that in terms of philosophy in which the crucifixion of Christ cannot be expressed.

1 Corinthians 1:17 in the Jerusalem Bible

Mao Tse Tung, butcher of his own Chinese people, said,:

If you use our words you will think our thoughts.

If you think our thoughts you will do our deeds.

The converse has application to the lay apostolate:

If our religious words are white-anted,
you will not be able to think our thoughts
nor will you be able to do our deeds.

DEVELOP APOLOGETICS FOR TODAY

Prompted by *Science is a Sacred Cow* (1950) by Anthony Standen, an industrial chemist (see internet second-hand books):

Atheist: Science is about facts — not religious superstitions.

Christian: Actually, science is about theories — some of which have turned out to be wrong.

Atheist: Okay: science is about theories based on facts.

Christian: Though sometimes that is turned on its head, and the facts have been fabricated to fit the theory.

Atheist: You accusing us evolutionists and psychologists?

Christian: Yes. Science is about facts and their explanation: **FACTS** are statements of truth, **THEORIES** explain them, and **SCIENTISTS** are so human and suffer from the same 'feet of clay' syndrome as the rest of fallen man.