

Mother of God Community
Sunday Night Prayer Meeting
Putting on the New Self
Lisa Sharafinski
August 5, 2007

GK Chesterton: Christianity isn't about nullifying our passions, like eastern meditation, but redirecting them to be enflamed with love of God. We put off the old in order to put on the new. Otherwise what's the point?

Be renewed in the spirit of our minds

In Eph 4:18 St. Paul reminds us that in our natural state our minds are darkened in understanding. Now that we are in Christ there is undeniable transformation. Yet some of our thinking is still in the darkness, has not yet been brought into the light of Christ. Therefore we do not think correctly or truthfully.

Eph 4:24 Put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth.

We must put away this old self and "be renewed in the spirit of our minds" (Eph 4:23). Now, the spirit of a person is the place where we meet God. Our minds can only be renewed as we meet God there. Prayer, communion with God, the sacraments are a necessity to putting on the new self. Without intimacy with Christ, we are just following the values of our own mind. As Don said, the salaries of actors and athletes compared to teachers and rescue workers indicate how off our judgment can be. That is because we are searching for meaning in a world we were not created for.

Our true meaning is found as we follow Christ. His judgments are altogether righteous and very different from our own. He did not come to the well early when all the best people would be there, he came at midday to a disgraced woman. He befriended Zacchaeus and Matthew, when the other leaders rejected them. Not to mention the sinful woman, blind man, good thief, you and me.

St. Paul is not asking us to be nice or to try harder. He knows the truth. "Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24-25). It's hard to make progress when you are carrying around a dead corpse all day. We cannot be humble, meek or self controlled on our own, it is the Lord who is all these things, not us. Through baptism and prayer that pursues God Christ will show his nature through us.

Even our Lord, in his humanity, prayed often and early to ground himself in the truth. Even our Lord received the Holy Spirit at his baptism to guide him as he cut through the darkness of this world. Does it make any sense for us to conclude that we don't need as much prayer as we once did?

Putting on the new self

Putting off the old and putting on the new self is true prayer and intimacy with Christ. Often this produces a tremendous struggle for truth. For example: I think a certain person is a jerk, yet I control my feelings and be nice cause I'm a Christian. This is darkened thinking with a stab at niceness thrown in to hide the truth which is "I hate this guy!" We need to see this person as God sees them, we think that means that God knows he's a jerk but loves him anyway, because he has to love everybody. There is my darkened understanding. I'm fitting God into my truth. The way God sees this person, isn't weak or indulgent. He's sees that person in TRUTH. I want to see the lovableness that God sees, even if some injustices need to be forgiven and perhaps addressed..

In my life it works a lot like a wrestling match before I yield because I don't want to be wrong / give in / die to self. But when I do it I do it for love of Christ and *only for love of him*. Why else would I choose to die? Are you willing to die in that moment for Christ?

Col 3:3 For you have died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Rom 6:7 For anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Rom 6:11 Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

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These truths are the moves I use in the wrestling match. First I put off the old nature, saying, "I have died on the cross with Christ and was buried with him. My self-justification in this struggle died with him. My ambitions, plans and values (some good some bad) died with Christ. Now I am free from sin and all attachment to lesser things and I dedicate my life to Christ. When Christ rose I rose with him. I love him and choose him now in this struggle with sin and the self-life. I place my self in his service to do whatever he tells me."

Speak the truth

v. 25 Therefore putting away falsehood speak the truth, each one to his neighbor for we are members of one another.

We must be very careful how we speak. Not every unexamined thought that comes across our minds is the truth. Also gossip, detraction, complaining and suspicion. Passive aggressive speech.

v. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, fury, (anger that runs loose in an un-renewed mind), shouting and reviling must be removed (banished) at no time, for no reason are they to be re-admitted.

Parents do their children great harm through angry/hostile speech. Such speech is like a blow to a child whose self-image is being written in his brain.

Be angry but do not sin

v. 26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger, and do not leave room for the devil.

According to Aquinas, anger itself, like any emotion, is not a sin. And like any emotion it must be subordinated to our reason and our will. Therefore it is what we think or do after the initial anger that is often sin. Example: Recently I got angry in response to an insulting remark. I was across the room and in this person's face so fast. "How dare you disrespect me!" I was responding from a darkened mind. God didn't even enter into it. After I prayed I was convicted that I can forgive and even embrace dishonor as a dying to the old-self. Yet what about when He is dishonored, am I as quick to defend his honor as I am my own? A vivid example of error in my core truth and being renewed in spirit of my mind by God.

Do not leave room for the devil

Do you ever feel a tightening in your chest during some conversations?

You are practicing self-control but inside you are riled up. When I settle for this it is like I am down on the ground and Satan has his foot on my chest. Basically, I am rendered ineffective. I am out of play. When we see this/feel this we must be aggressive. Its not enough to still my passions, like the Buddhists do. I must redirect them to God. Not only do I not want to hate this person, *I want to love this person!* I want to love this person with the love of Christ and I will not let go of him until I do. "Zeal for your house consumes me" (Jn 2:17). Christ's love in us, living through us. The devil would have no hold on us.

Be kind/compassionate/forgiving

v. 32 And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.

What is God's forgiveness like? Does he forgive us but then avoid us? No, He is present to us!

Example: Recently I went to a gathering. When I heard a certain person was going to be there I didn't want to go. Then I realized not only do I need to go, I need to love her. So when I saw her I embraced her

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said some kind words and promptly went and sat in another room. She seemed to be pursuing conversation with me. At first I only made small talk, then under conviction, I disregarded past hurts. I turned toward her, looked into her eyes and really tried to be present to her, trying to see her from God's point of view. After all that is the only real point of view, isn't it? My tutor, the Holy Spirit, was teaching me.

Lay hold of Love and Truth

Mt 11:12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing and forceful men lay hold of it.

We have to apply ourselves. Parable of Talents: a great thing has happened to me. I have been given 5 talents by the Lord until his return. Will we I continue to self-regulate my vices, picking and choosing when I'm going to die to self, come to mass and prayer meeting and hope for the best.

Or do I want wild consuming love like the saints? Do I want the love of God to possess me? Why maneuver through the day apart from the burning love of Christ? What do I want to say to him when he returns? What do I want him to say to me?

A prayer to Mary from Mother Teresa of Calcutta:

"Mary, my dearest Mother, give me a heart so beautiful, so pure, so immaculate, so full of love and humility, that I may receive Jesus as you did - and go in haste to give Him to others."

Assignment

Each day this week, pick one person to bring before the Lord in prayer, one person that you want to love more. One person toward whom you will banish resentment, ready or not. Pray that you see that person as God sees him or her. Write down what God shows you about that person or about yourself. Then love that person with the full force of Christ's love in you.

Monday:

Tuesday:

Wednesday:

Thursday:

Friday:

Saturday:

Sunday: Rest