

The Grace of Wholeheartedness

Christian happiness is the fruit of renunciation. (Conclusion)

By Zena Hitz

We say that someone has dedicated their life to mathematics, or to music, or to ending the achievement gap, or to teaching sewing or gardening, or to the good of their hometown. We mean that they gave everything they had to it.

God is not the only person who demands wholehearted commitment without compromise. So does anyone we seek to love unconditionally. If I claim true devotion to my romantic partner but hedge my bets by keeping channels open with my previous lovers, or if I keep investigating real estate in lands where I know he will not live, I am lying, either to myself or him or both. My love is conditional until I throw away the exit routes. I am meant to love my child without condition; if my other activities compete with my child's needs, or worse, threaten their safety, I have failed to love them as I should.

The clearest violation of wholeheartedness is corruption. A police officer wears the uniform of law, order, and the protection of the innocent, but takes bribes from criminal rackets on the side. A teacher or priest, dedicated to the care of the young, secretly preys on them. Both Plato and Aristotle claimed that the ban on private property that made the ancient Spartans so austere and admirable was too harsh to be borne: they kept secret treasuries and hoarded gold in private. We call corruption "hypocrisy" after the Greek word for acting, putting on a mask. The corrupt person leads a double life behind a false front, not only for public consumption, but as part of that person's own self-deception. The real danger of living a lie is not so much getting caught in it as beginning to believe the lie.

Total dedication and wholeheartedness are among the strongest themes of the New Testament. The voice of God, spoken through John in the book of Revelation, tells the church of Laodicea:

I know your works, I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, "I am rich and have no need of anything," and yet do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. (Revelation 3:16–17)

Lukewarmness is grounds for rejection by God. The kingdom of heaven is like a pearl of great price for which one sells everything. The sons of Zebedee are fishing on the Galilee when they meet Jesus; they leave their boats and nets to follow him. The good in question, however we understand it, is worth all of our other goods—or rather, it is incomparably more valuable than anything and everything else.

Lukewarmness seems different from corruption: it is more lack of commitment than hypocrisy. Why is it condemned so harshly? The passage from Revelation not only condemns lukewarmness; it diagnoses it. We say, "I am rich and have no need of anything," not realizing that we are in fact wretched and vulnerable. Lukewarmness and compromise suggest a double life, built around a central fantasy of self-sufficiency, where one's vulnerability and weakness is kept private.

It is the epitome of lukewarmness to treat God as one choice among others, as an added benefit to one's already wonderful, flourishing life.

It was that fundamental helplessness that I caught a glimpse of when hearing the story of Abraham and Isaac. I feared that if I were not in

charge of my happiness, I would not attain it. Such fears were fed by my relative wealth and success. Wealth is dangerous: it provides the illusion of dominance over one's surroundings. Yet ultimately my control is extremely limited by the luck of circumstances and by inescapable forms of human ignorance. Wealth can seem to make these contingencies shrink, but they cannot be eliminated. Dependence and blindness are core realities for every

human being.

The illusion of dominance and control that wealth and comfort bring can be subtle—I was, after all, very grateful for the comfort and luxury I lived in, and the gratitude softened my sense of entitlement. Yet once I had the luxury of high status, it was central to the way I thought of myself. It was deeply painful even to leave the academic ivory tower, where I had finished my degree, to move on to a merely excellent job. Even my initial interest in religion showed signs of the illusion of self-sufficiency. It is the epitome of luke-warmness to treat God as one choice among others, as an added benefit to one's already wonderful, flourishing life. No wonder the story of Abraham unsettled me so.

But instead of becoming “like gods” as promised, Adam and Eve develop a double life. They see their nakedness and cover it. They hide in the garden from God. Shame divides them from themselves and from God. Shame relative to what, one wonders? Shame relative to what they think they ought to be, to their divine pretences. No god would have a tender, naked body. Perhaps the knowledge of good and evil promised by the fruit is real, but the evil turns out to be rooted in what is vulnerable and weak. Eternity is good; death is evil. To know this is to be torn by a double consciousness, unable not to long for eternity, unable to completely ignore my human nature, subject to ignorance, folly, death, and disease.

Source: Commonweal 23 March 2023

THOUGHTS ON WALKING

“The mystic is the man or woman who cannot stop walking” (Michel de Certeau SJ 1925-1986, Philosopher)

“Constantly, we must go further. To expatriate oneself from one's ideas, to get away from one's certainties, to start again... (Charles Wright, French writer and hermit)

“Above all, do not lose your desire to walk. Everyday, I walk myself into a state of well-being & walk away from every illness. I have walked myself into my best thoughts, and I know of no thought so burdensome that one cannot walk away from it. But by sitting still, & the more one sits still, the closer one comes to feeling ill. Thus if one just keeps on walking, everything will be all right.”

— Søren Kierkegaard, philosopher, letter to his favourite niece, Henriette Lund in 1847.

PARISH CALENDAR

Spring 2023

23 March CCF (French Community) Veillée Pénitentielle, 19.30

24 March, 11am: Confirmation: St. Conleth's College, and

John Scottus School.

25 March, 7:30pm: Concert: Dublin Symphony Orchestra

30 March, 11am: Confirmation: St Christopher's School

31 March, 7pm: Concert: Maire Ledwith Singers

1 April, 6pm: Vigil Mass of Palm Sunday; Piccolo Lasso Choir



PRAY FAST GIVE

Lenten Holy Hour
(Saturdays of Lent)
6:45 -7:45pm:



Masses Times

Sundays: Vigil, 6pm (Saturday), 9.30am, 11am, 5pm

Croatian Community Mass 6.30pm

French-speaking community mass 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month at 12.30

Collections Last Week

1st Collection: €1,135

Share Collection: €670

THANK YOU

It is very heartening to note that our collections are now almost fully back to where they were pre-Covid

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Contacts: Fr Fachtna McCarthy, Administrator, Fr Patrick Claffey C.C. Fr Josip Levaković C.C. Tel 01-6600075

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