

Living the Spirit Summer Thoughts 2015

In this writing I will reveal that not all of my thoughts are directed to the spiritual in a formal way. Of course, I am always praying to the Holy Spirit to inspire me to write about what He wants written. I have to believe that He would like me to have a simple conversation with you. If nothing else, it will show that everyone, priests included, have multi-layered ideas, interests and preoccupations.

Every morning, except Sunday, I have been doing the puzzles in the newspaper. They say it keeps the mind alert when one starts adding years to one's age statistic. Of course, some of the clues escape me, especially when the clue is a rock star name. You would not image how ignorant I am of all such things. The Cryptoquote today gave me pause: "The most beautiful thing in the world, of course, is the world itself." [Wallace Stevens]. This naturally led to my thinking how fitting this is in the light of Pope Francis's latest encyclical about our world.

The media took to the theme with gusto. But as usual they ignored the part where he writes about such things as the waste of humans, like the unborn. In his desire to remind us to favor the poor and work to sustain them as a part of our humanity we can find great agreement. And this not only from avowed Christians!

The early part of summer saw me making my retreat at the Friary. The place is special to me when I recall how many times the grace of the Lord touched my soul. I always find the place such a refuge. Of course, having been the pastor of St. Francis I found the atmosphere of Franciscan presence a special grace. [I hope those of you who can will help support this place of retreat and hospitality. We surely need it.]

The retreat this year was led by Bishop Gainer. He was the head of the Tribunal where I worked as judge. Of course, he was a splendid leader for the priests. Let me share one aspect of a conference. Bishop Gainer put some formal art on the screen. It was Raphael's *Transfiguration*. Do you remember this event in the Lord's life? As Jesus was transfigured, showing His glory, He spoke to Moses and Elijah. Peter, James and John were there. Peter became the spokesman for them. "Lord it is good to be here...."

The Bishop asked us to think which of the persons in the painting we might be. A hard question! Could I ever think of myself as like Moses or Elijah? Every priest, after all, is called to be bearer of God's good news. Could I be like one of the apostles, overawed by the presence of Jesus in my life? Is there even a small part of me that could be like Jesus – now or ever? Dear reader, who might **you** be? Can we all agree it is good for us to be where Jesus is? Can we realize His glory so that we may also learn the lessons of His Crucifixion? For us a good reminder of salvation for us comes from the generosity of the glorified Christ setting aside His divinity to give us our new life of grace.

As always summer brings challenges to one's everyday life. For me there are the little frustrations. I find myself with too much inertia, not getting one with my projects. I like

to blame it on the weather! I also wonder what those little reminders of my mortality may mean. I am still one who manages to read in detail *The Catholic Register*. I wish that I could discuss many of the current articles. I do not always agree with every line of print. I also may find myself reading the newspaper, but not page for page. I find the media quite inept when they publish their understanding of religious matters. I fear many are given disinformation by a secular world instrument of knowledge.

What do I make of such issues as same sex marriage? Now we hear of “marriage equality.” See how a nice name is put on a subject of some moral danger? At once as I write this, I want to make clear that I do not hate those who engage in such a relationship. Nor should you, or any follower of Christ and His Church. At the same time I must add my fear of the corollaries that will follow from the Supreme Court’s decision. Religious freedom will surely be written out of the nation’s life, unless we stand firm to defend it.

Having been a Latin scholar in earlier years, I had to know the history of Rome. Its downfall was not disconnected with its moral and ethical and natural disarray. Having worked for years with helping the married find a solution to their mistakes invalidating a sacramental marriage, I also have been thinking of what needs to be said by all of us about marriage.

Marriage for us begins with the plan of God as imaged in the Old Testament. We also could use a good reminder of the history of marriage. [I recall a good article on this in the original Catholic Encyclopedia.] Then quite simply the Church has defined marriage as a sacrament, an outward sign instituted by God to give grace.

What about Communion for the divorced and remarried? Here I must keep my thoughts private at the moment. I just hope that none will let presumption rule the day!

Again, not all my thoughts are serious. I do wonder from time to time what will happen at Downton Abbey next January. I think of the many miles I have accumulated and wonder if I dare try to use them to travel, given my difficulties. What makes Thursday special? Having a day filled with “Blue Bloods” with its somewhat Catholic milieu? Should I really eat those beautiful tomatoes sent into the rectory, given how they challenge digestion? Will I ever get around to sewing the button on that winter coat before it goes to the cleaner? Or what to do about the hem on my favorite trousers?

To get back to where I started this “conversation” I think about that saying I deciphered. It really is a beautiful world. Nature certainly tells me that. But there is a deeper beauty. It resides in the people around me. It is simply love in its many-splendored form that makes Gods gift of time a great joy and blessing! May you know that joy. I pray God gives you His blessing.

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God love you always!
Monsignor Morrison

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