



Of Seeds and Flowers



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Confronting the Social Deficit

We live in an age of pluralism, an age which is rich in everything but clarity. We are living in a sensitivity coma. No one is able to use the words right/wrong, good/bad, virtue/sin, good/evil, for fear that they might offend someone. How many times do you find yourself censoring what you are thinking or are about to say - even when you know it is the absolute truth - for fear you might offend someone? There are 7 Capital Sins, but here in the U.S. we have an 8th, the fear or inability to make a moral decision. And so we create a moral vacuum, a moral no-man's land. As a result our institutions, and WE, do not pass on the values, the faith, the character, the manners from one generation to the next. Dante firmly chastises us in his "Inferno," "The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who, in a time of moral crisis, remained neutral."

Children are begging to be led. They want adults, parents, teachers, clergy, in their lives whose spirits are rich, whose lives are full, whose values are clear, whose faith is strong, and that are able to love and hug them into wholeness and thereby give them the power to lovingly pass on that richness. Don't be embarrassed about doing it. Instead, we give them this "mealy-mouthed", secularized, politically correct American Civil religion that is like trying to nail Jell-o to the wall. -listen to the presidential candidates. **How we long to hear the truth, simply stated.** We need adults who are not afraid to lead. - not afraid to say, "No". **Speak up.** If the alarm had sounded 30 seconds earlier, the Titanic would have survived.

Too often the people with the power have little knowledge or wisdom and those who have the knowledge and wisdom are 'Without power. **Real** empowerment is giving knowledge to those with power and power to those with the knowledge. Our pride, the titles we hold, our need to be right is always in the way of truth.

The famous historian, Arnold Toynbee, wrote an especially fine chapter in one of his books entitled, "The Sense of Drift". He defines "drift" as "**a carelessness about the loss of spiritual and moral growth**". -**an indifference towards things spiritual**. Drifting is, to his mind, one of the most painful of tribulations that affects the souls of people in an age of social decay. In our lives and in the life of a society, drifting is the failure to offer any kind of resistance to the false currents of life. Icebergs drift; that is why they are destroyed. - little by little. As long as they remain attached to the main body of ice, they are safe, but once they break off and drift from the "truth" of the cold water to the "compromise" of the warm water, they melt.

In our age of social and moral decay we have become a nation of moral drifters. Morality matters, values matter, culture matters, civility and manners matter, God and religion matter, character and integrity matter. No more common denominator teenagers or adults. Hold the line!

"I sought for the greatness of the United States in her commodious harbors, her ample rivers, her fertile fields: and boundless forests - and it was not there. I sought for it in her rich mines, her vast world commerce, her public school system, and in her institutions of higher learning - and it was not there. I looked for it in her Democratic Congress and her matchless Constitution - and it was not there. Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with the truth did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to

be good, America will cease to be great!" Alexis de Tocqueville 1831

"Education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society ... We must remember; that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education." • Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Vision and Reality

"There comes a time in your life when **you walk away from all the drama and people who create it**. You surround yourself with people who make you laugh. Forget the bad, and focus on the good. Love the people who treat you right, pray for the ones who don't. Life is too short to be anything but happy." Jose Harris. The less you respond to negativity the more peaceful your life becomes. *Happiness tomorrow depends on doing the truth Today!!*

The Reality that we call God is mightier and more vast than, the astronomers now say, a trillion galaxies, PERMEATES MY EXISTENCE AS A HUMAN BEING. Be impressed and MOST GRATEFUL!! Lord, help me to believe the truth about myself, no matter how beautiful it is. "Test yourselves: Do you know that Jesus the Christ is really in you? If not, you have failed the test." 2 Corinthians 13:6

"Rabbi" asked the tourist, "where is your furniture?"

"Where is yours?" replied Rabbi Hofetz Chaim.

"Mine?" asked the puzzled American. "But I'm only a visitor here. I am only passing through."

"So am I," said the Rabbi. "We are all only passing through."

Gabriel Marcel often spoke of man as a pilgrim. In an essay he wrote "Value and Immortality" "Perhaps a stable order can only be established on earth if man always remains accurately conscious that his condition is that of a traveler."

I've been at the deathbed of about 450 people; people who are about "to travel". Do you know what people say at this critical time in their life? 1) I wish I had spent more time with my wife or husband. 2) I wish I had spent more time with my children and 3) I wish I had spent more time with my God. NO ONE SAYS, *"I wish I spent more time at work."*

INFORMATION is not necessarily TRANSFORMATION. We need transformed people today, and not just people with answers. The British-American author D. H. Lawrence said that "the world fears a new experience more than anything, Because a new experience displaces so many old experiences. Ideas are not a problem. *The world can pigeon-hole any idea*," he said. They are easily dodged. But *a true inner experience is something else*, again. It changes us, and human beings do not like to change. Author Rosemary Haughton rightly speaks of the same as "the knife edge of experience." *NOTHING changes us like encounters with God. Education helps, but is the encounter with God that does the FULL job.* Easter (the Christian life) is not about information but TRANSFORMATION.

"I AM NOT WHAT HAPPENED TO ME, I AM WHAT I HAVE CHOSEN TO BECOME." Carl Jung.

Be who you needed when you were younger. Always go to sleep with a dream and wake up with a purpose.

"I am done with great things and big plans, great institutions and big success. I am for those tiny, invisible loving human forces that work from individual to individual, creeping through the crannies of the world like so many rootlets, or like the capillary oozing of water, which, if given time, will rend the hardest monuments of pride." William James

"Someday, after we have mastered the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God *the energies of love*. **Then for the second time in the history of the world man will have discovered fire.**" Teilhard de Chardin, S.J



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Not "A Drop of Rain... A Bit of Sun..." - JUST PLAIN REALITY

The following is a description of a partial birth abortion by Martin Haskell, M.D., a pioneer and advocate of the procedure, in 1992. Should we stay silent so people can be comfortable?

A woman who is pregnant between the fifth and sixth month has the opening of her womb dilated over two to three days. Instruments are then used to reach into the uterus and grab the feet of the fetus. The fetus is delivered until only the head remains inside the womb. The operator then uses a knife to make an opening in the base of the baby's skull and a suction tube is inserted into the skull and the brain is sucked out. The skull then collapses, killing the fetus and allowing for delivery of the fetus in one piece.

There was a time when even to describe this method of abortion as objectively and dispassionately as possible would have left no doubt about whether it had a place in either constitutional law or a civilized society.

I reluctantly share the above because today I heard Mrs. Clinton say that she believes a child in the womb has no constitutional rights UNTIL IT IS BORN, contrary to the Supreme Court decision; that she is in FAVOR OF PARTIAL BIRTH ABORTION and that we have to change the *cultural and religious beliefs of Americans* who think otherwise; and that Planned Parenthood must be fully taxpayer funded to promote all of this. I only wish **she would watch just one partial birth abortion** before making such a campaign pledge. Nine months in the womb: no rights. One minute after birth and twenty inches out of the womb: constitutional rights. *Destroy an Eagle's egg: \$250,000 fine and up to 2 years in jail. Destroy a baby in the womb: NOTHING!* Choose one of the following

An ancient axiom states: "People cannot be reasoned out of positions they have not been reasoned into."

"We must not become comfortable with evil that has grown respectable with age." Henry David Thoreau

"It's not so much the things you "know" that hurt you, as the things you "know" that AIN'T SO." Will Rogers

NOONE, not church, minister, preacher etc. should tell anyone how to vote but all of these people, by position and leadership authority and obligation, must remind their people about what they say they believe, their creed, their integrity, their character and to choose accordingly. *Your conscience and character must come into the voting booth.*

Four candles were burning brightly. They were all talking to each other. The I" candle spoke, "I am the Candle of Peace. I have been burning for two thousand years but I am tired. I see a world where there is a war going on. There is fear of terrorism. There is violence in cities and homes. I just want to go out." At that moment, the candle of peace is blown out.

Next, the Candle of Joy speaks up. "I also have been burning brightly for years. I only see sadness and pain.

I want to go out," and, at that moment, the Candle of Joy is extinguished.

Next, the Candle of Love speaks out. "As the Candle of Love, I, too, want to go out. I only see hatred, bigotry, a lack of forgiveness and compassion. I am so tired." Immediately it went out.

Finally, the **Candle of Hope speaks out so loudly**, "Oh, please, never extinguish my candle from our world. As long as you have Hope, you have the possibility for Peace, Love and Joy. Without Hope, you are truly doomed."

At that moment, *the Candle of Hope relights the Candles of Peace, Love and Joy.*

May the Candle of Hope lead us forward to a better tomorrow.

Speaking Softly

On April 3rd Father Ed Hays died. The author of 30 books, the founder of a spiritual growth community outside of Kansas City, but most importantly the gentle, creative lover of God and soft transformer of souls.

Not many years after he was ordained, with great trepidation, he went to see the Archbishop of Kansas City, Ignatius Stricker, to request 3 months leave to go to a Trappist Monastery to deepen his prayer life. (Wouldn't it be wonderful if many a bishop, priest, minister, rabbi did this?) The Archbishop, to his great surprise, said, "Why don't you take off 6 months?" He did; and began his quest by backpacking through India.

Throughout his pilgrimage he had a deep longing to share what was happening spiritually inside of him. With an interpreter, he visited Hindu holy men living in caves at the base of the Himalayas. "Those experiences opened my heart to the catholicity, the universality, of prayer and the search for holiness," he said. Fr. Hays recalled being with a Hindu holy man who had kept his vow of silence for 40 years, sitting in a cave. (Interesting side note: All of the beginnings of Eastern holiness and asceticism was transplanted from Western Christianity.) Father Hays wrote questions to the holy man on a slate. "Have you ever seen God?" The holy man wrote back "yes" several times, each with larger letters. And then Hays chalked back: "What's necessary to see God?" The man grabbed the slate again and replied: "You must have a pure heart." "Wow! I couldn't believe it," said Hayes. "Those were exactly the same words Jesus said, 'Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God.'"

Hays taught that the Incarnation was not just a moment in time, but a continuous "infleshing of the Divine Mystery *within us*." Once he said, "If we believe in infleshment, then we also see God, not as otherworldly, as separate, as different, but rather as of this world. Since the Incarnation and Resurrection He has inter-penetrated all of reality. His is, "a plan to bring ALL THINGS into one in Him, in the heavens and on earth." Eph.1: 10. The smell of burning leaves, an evergreen, a turkey in the oven...isn't that the smell of God? Doesn't God taste like pizza. a good steak, salmon?" REAL prayer makes us **aware of the reality in which we are swimming**. *Prayer changes things, mainly ME*. Ed Hays knew that. Requiescat in pace!

