



Of Seeds and Flowers



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THANKS, GIVING AND LOVING!

THANKS -The following story is from Mirjana Soldo, one of the visionaries at Medugorje. She writes in her absolutely marvelous book, "My Heart Will Triumph", "I always tell people who come to Medugorje (and over 53 million have come and most leave with life changing experiences) that a spiritual healing is infinitely more valuable than a physical one.

I went to St. James Church for Mass one morning and sat in a pew near the statue of the Blessed Mother. Moments later, an Italian woman came in and knelt in front of the statue. She started crying and I heard her whisper, "Why, God? Why me?" She cried throughout the entire Mass and kept repeating those words. I didn't know why she suffered so terribly, but I cried along with her. As Mass ended, she suddenly stopped crying. Her look of sorrow changed to joy. "Why not me?" she said. "Yes! Why **not** me?"

I went to her after the final blessing. "Hello," I said. The woman seemed embarrassed. "Pardon me," she said. "I hope I didn't disturb you during the Mass." "Don't worry. If anything, you made me pray harder." She smiled and looked up at the ceiling of the church. "Oh, this place! I think this is the best day of my life. May I tell you?"

"You don't have to ask permission. Tell me." "Well, I have three handicapped children back home. I came to Medugorje to beg God to heal them, and I wanted to know why He gave me this cross. But now I understand! It hit me when I was praying. Why wouldn't God give me this cross? It means He sees that I can carry it! He trusts me and I have to trust Him. He'll help me when it gets too heavy. I can't wait to go home and kiss my children. I'm so blessed to have them."

I started crying again. "And they're blessed to have you." The woman looked at the statue of the Blessed Mother. "You know, it's funny, I didn't even ask God to heal them like I planned on doing. And guess what? I don't think I need to anymore."

GIVING - "*Bis dat qui cito dat*", is Latin for "She gives twice who gives quickly". I taught my Latin students about 200 Latin expressions that they might encounter in their cultured lives. I shared "*Bis dat qui cito dat*" as a segue to telling the following true story about my wife, Cindy.

We were on our way home from Sam's; six children in the station wagon-ages 2 to 12. I was driving; Cindy was in the front passenger seat. It was raining "cats and dogs". We were stopped in slow moving traffic about a city block from a stop light. The sidewalk was just to the right of the car. We saw a street person walking along the side of the car, soaking wet.

There was an umbrella, still dripping wet on the car floor in front of Cindy. Without a moment of hesitation Cindy took the umbrella, opened the car door, raised it and gave it to the dripping wet man and, just as quickly, got back into the car. Traffic was now open, we moved on. Not a word was exchanged in that holy moment but none of us have ever forgotten that moment of "quickly given", "twice given", act of kindness. My wife, the mother of six!! She is special.

You could hear a pin drop as I told this story to my students and, in the telling, they knew my wife, and what I valued, and how we, so often, taught our children. *Bis dat qui cito dat.*

Sometimes we teach best when we are not teaching at all. Kids today, I've found, respond more to WITNESSES than to teachers, and especially best, to teachers who DO WITNESS to what they believe and teach. "*What you DO speaks so loud I cannot hear what you are saying.*" Emerson

AND LOVING - A man was exploring caves by the seashore. In one of the caves he found a canvas bag with a bunch of hardened clay balls. It was like someone had rolled clay balls and left them out in the sun to bake. They didn't look like much, but they intrigued the man, so he took the bag out of the cave with him. As he strolled along the beach, he would throw the clay balls one at a time out into the ocean as far as he could. He thought little about it, until he dropped one of the clay balls and it cracked open on a rock. Inside was a beautiful, precious stone. Excited, the man started breaking open the remaining clay balls. Each contained similar treasure; He found thousands of dollars of jewels in the 20 or so clay balls he had left.

Then it struck him. He had been on the beach a long time. He had thrown maybe 50 or 60 of the clay balls with their hidden treasure into the ocean waves. Instead of thousands of dollars in treasure, he could have taken home tens of thousands, but he had just thrown it away.

So often we look at people, maybe even ourselves, and we see the external clay vessel. It doesn't look like much from the outside. It isn't always beautiful or sparkling. So we look away discount them. We see one person as less important than someone who is more beautiful or stylish or well known or wealthy. We don't take the time to find the treasure hidden inside that person.

There is a treasure in each and every one of us, if we but take the time to get to know the person before us. The clay then begins to peel away and the brilliant gem begins to shine forth. May we **not come** to the end of our lives and find out that we have thrown away a fortune in friendships because the gems were hidden in bits of clay. The most important decision we make in life is *who to love and who not to love*. "If you spend time judging people you will have *no time to love them.*" Mother Theresa

One of our neighbors humbly told me she often pretends that she is the only person on earth and then when she meets someone "she is so surprised" and treats that person as if they were **the only other person on earth**. **Everybody becomes special, even your spouse!**

"Our character is what we do when we think **no one is looking.**" H . Jackson Brown

"Blowing out someone else's candle doesn't make yours shine any brighter." Anon.

Heaven and Hell-The Real Difference

A man spoke with the Lord about heaven and hell. The Lord said to the man, "Come, I will show you Hell." They entered a room where a group of people sat around a huge pot of stew. Everyone was famished, desperate and starving. Each held a spoon that reached the pot, but each spoon had a handle so much longer than their own arm that it could not be used to get the stew into their own mouths. The suffering was terrible.

"Come, now I will show you heaven," the Lord said. They entered another room, identical to the first-the pot of stew, the group of people, the long-handled spoons. But there everyone was happy and well-nourished. I don't understand," said the man. "Why are they happy here when they were miserable in the other room and everything was the same?" The Lord smiled. "Ah, it is simple," he said. "Here they have learned to feed each other." Ann Landers HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!

Vision and Reality

A sculptor, in the middle ages, had to be very careful when looking for a solid piece of marble. The unscrupulous quarry masters would often fill the cracks of a bad piece of marble with wax so an unsuspecting sculptor would get fooled and only discovered the poor quality of the marble after they began to work.

Experienced sculptors would go to the quarry and ask the quarry master for a piece of marble that was "SINE CERA." "Sine", in Latin means *without* and "Cera" means *wax*. So the sculptor would ask for a block of marble that was *sine-cera*.- i.e. without wax.

We get the English word "sincere" from "sine cera". So, a sincere person is one that has no wax filling the "cracks" or flaws in their life. - A person who is in touch with the "True self" not the "false or illusory self" that subtly motivates so much of what we do.

"Your love must be **sincere**. Detest what is evil, cling to what is good. Love one another with the affection of brothers and sisters. Anticipate each other in showing respect. Do not grow slack but be fervent in spirit; he whom you serve is the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient under trial, persevere in prayer." Romans 12: 9-12



About 6 weeks after I was ordained a priest in 1963, I had to cover a parish for a priest who died suddenly. The parish was deep into the "coal regions" of Pennsylvania. I had to celebrate the Eucharist for the parishioners in the main parish but also for a very small mission church about 10 miles from the main parish. It was near a military base and most of the people in the church were soldiers.

When I got to the church I went directly to the sacristy to vest for the Eucharist. The sacristy was about 6 ft. by 8 ft. - very small, but I have never forgotten the words that hung above the vesting table. They read: "Celebrate, O priest, as if this were your **first mass, your last mass, your only mass.**"

I think of these words (and am moved deeply by them) often before I celebrate the Eucharist for my family each Sunday. I am about to go downstairs now and celebrate the Eucharist this morning and I will do so better for having allowed these words to sink into my heart and take root and make me realize what a marvelous thing is about to happen.

Just suppose the Eucharist was celebrated only once every ten years in each country and the only way you could get into the stadium was to purchase a ticket. Can you imagine the scurrying, the money that would exchange hands etc., to be present at that Eucharist.-and with the great bonus of being able to receive God in the Eucharist? -and you and I can do this **every Sunday in the nearby Catholic church!!!** How easily we take great things for granted!! How was your celebration last Sunday and how will it be next Sunday?

CHOSEN, CHOSEN BY GOD

Just think, you're not here by chance, but by God's choosing. His hand formed you and made you the person you are.

He compares you to no one else- you are one of a kind. You lack nothing that His grace can't give you. He has allowed you and chosen you to be here at this time in history to fulfill His special purpose for this generation.

The Lord answers prayer in 4 ways: 1) No, not yet. 2) No, I love you too much. 3) Yes, I thought you'd never ask! 4) Yes, and here's more!!

Christians should pray for 20 minutes a day **unless they are too busy**; in which case they should **pray for an hour**.

Speaking Softly

A water bearer in China had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfections, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house." The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the master's table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house.

Each of us has our own unique flaws. **We are all cracked pots.** Don't be afraid of your flaws. Acknowledge them. The Lord will use your flaws to grow flowers to grace His Father's table. In God's great economy, nothing goes to waste. Hug your flaws, and allow God to take advantage of them, and you too, can be the source of beauty.

"O God, help me to believe the truth about myself, no matter how beautiful it is."

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