



StillPoint Retreats

Symposium

I Did It For God

In studying the various world religions, I always looked for common threads. And yes, underneath the superficialities of language and culture, they all looked very, very much alike. I'll save that for another time. Something that struck me and troubled me was the insistence that our final thought before death dictated our after-death experience. That didn't seem right insofar as many people die in extreme circumstances of physical and emotional suffering. A higher-level understanding was expressed by numerous saints and sages who clarified this by stating that it is our dominant thought pattern or inner state that determines our after-death experience. Always having been a somewhat obsessive seeker, I asked, over many years, what sanctifies human life so much so, that we are at peace at death. What gives us peace at death? Is it the same as what gives us peace in life?

I asked this question to my spiritual director, a man of great wisdom and very few words. He said: "do it all for God." It took me quite a while to puzzle this out. You see, he would never explain such truths. He pointed the way and had me make the journey by myself.

Some pieces came together in a fugue-like manner. The core principle was the sanctification of suffering, realizing that suffering came to us not as a punishment but as a means to go deeper into our relationship with God. A higher octave of that is: "God comes to us as our life." And it all came together with a practical aspect. You see, in the monastery for a while I was low man on the totem pole. I got a lot of crap jobs that kept me busy, even during my coveted free time. Others were out walking on a beautiful day and I was in a chapel, with a bucket of ammonia, breaking down the wax on an already perfectly polished floor. Or after bedtime, I'd be up with a slide ruler (no calculators) building a homemade spreadsheet to calculate the distribution of funds to be spent on the overall operation of some aspect the monastery for the next quarter. Internally, I was in a semi-continuous state of "pitching a bitch" about how I had no life! It was all just one duty after another!

I was soon to have a "peak experience!" I went to my spiritual director and dared to express all of the above. In a purely Socratic manner, he asked: (paraphrased)

Does God exist?

(me) Yes.

What is God?

(me) Well, ultimately God is Life.

What part of Life is God?

(me) All of it.

Does not God come to you as your life and all of its circumstances?

(me) Yes, that is the ultimate understanding.

So, ultimately, your chores are God coming to you?

(me) Yes.

And since it is true, that how you deal with your life is a reflection of how you deal with God, is it not true that you are dealing with your life with resentment? Then you are not, in effect, resisting God?

(me) Yup!

And God is Perfect Love - the Love that seeks the highest good for you! The Love that brings you things (a life) to deal with, such that by dealing with your life in love and acceptance, you sanctify the process of realizing your unity with Him.

(me) Yes, that's it. I see it now.

Son, the way to truly sanctify your life is not necessarily through thinking the right theological thoughts or participating in the right ceremonies or adopting the right religion etc. It is in "doing everything in your life for God." He gave you x, y and z. Sanctify it by doing it for Him. And then, on the last day, with your last breath, you can have the ultimate peace of knowing that you did your life "for Him."

From that day on, I have been blessed with experiencing everything that comes my way as coming to me from a very loving God, who seeks only my highest good. Do I like everything that comes my way? Not even close. (Ask my doctors) I don't have to. But if I seek this inner peace more than the comfort of having life "my way" then - bring it on! (I can't believe I just said that! ha ha)

Seriously, when you do your life for God, it can still remain exhausting, disappointing and very difficult at times. But at all times, when you do it for God, there is a deep inner glow of peace that will follow you wherever you go - on this side or the next.

Only God

Only Love,

Jerry

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