

Holy Family - December 28, 2025

The Difference between Cowards and Heroes

John Thomas Randolph offers this modern story of running and returning to illustrate our Lord's circumstances. Here is the difference between cowardice and heroism. The coward runs away and stays away. The hero runs away but he always returns at the appropriate time.

I have a biography of General Douglas MacArthur that was written by Bob Considine. The picture on the front cover shows the general standing like a boulder, looking off into the distance, with that famous corncob pipe in his mouth. You can almost hear him telling the people of the Philippines, "I came through and I shall return." Ordered to make a strategic withdrawal, his promise to return became the rallying cry for a whole country. MacArthur had to "run away" for a while, but he would "return" — and it was the returning that mattered most.

Jesus ran away into Egypt, but he returned! All of our running away, as Christians, should be with the ultimate goal of returning.

Why do we run away? When I look at my own experience, I find that I usually run away for one of three reasons: I am frightened; I am fatigued; or I am frustrated. Isn't that why you run away too? (by John Thomas Randolph from *The Best Gift: Running Away and Returning* CSPublishing Company, pp. 39-40)

A Power Higher Than I

After trying everything else, Shelly was present for her first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. Skeptical and listening half-heartedly at first, the words of Martha caught her attention. Martha told the group, "I just knew that I could handle alcohol and my other problems on my own, but I couldn't. Seven years ago I came to my first A.A. meeting and since that time I have grown as a person beyond anything I could have ever imagined."

Martha exuded confidence and depth. She spoke of a power "higher than I," the God of Jesus Christ, and the way in which God now lived at the center of her life. Her words oozed with sincere encouragement and concern. Most of all, Martha exhibited a thankfulness which words could not express. Shelly, who came to the meeting doubtful that anything she would hear would change the way she felt or thought,

made her way to Martha when the meeting was over. "I want what you have," Shelly told Martha, "I want what you have."

Shelly wanted the compassion and depth and hope which Martha knew, but she may not have realized fully how Martha came to know those things. Martha learned compassion from a time of deep personal suffering. She acquired spiritual depth from hours of praying when there was nowhere else to turn. She discovered hope by taking one step at a time because "one day at a time" was too much to be expected.

Shelly said, "I want what you have. Where do I get it?" And Martha told her, "It comes from being right where you are and doing just what you are doing." Martha went on to tell Shelly the oddest story about learning compassion when we are hurting, and learning love when we are excluded, and learning hope when we are helpless. In short Martha said that it is out of Egypt that we are called.

(by William B. Kincaid, III from *And Then Came The Angel*, CSS Publishing Company, Inc, Adapted.)

He Moved Into the Ward With Us

Dr. John Rosen, a psychiatrist in New York City, is well known For his work with catatonic schizophrenics. Normally doctors remain separate and aloof from their patients. Dr. Rosen moves into the ward with them. He places his bed among their beds. He lives the life they must live. Day-to-day, he shares it. He loves them. if they don't talk, he doesn't talk either. It is as if he understands what is happening. His being there, being with them, communicates something that they haven't experienced in years—somebody understands.

But then he does something else. He puts his arms around them and hugs them. He holds these unattractive, unlovable, sometimes incontinent persons, and loves them back into life. Often, the first words they speak are simply, "Thank you."

This is what the Christ did for us at Christmas. He moved into the ward with us. He placed his bed among our beds. Those who were there, those who saw him, touched him and were in turn touched by him and restored to life. The first word they had to say was "thank you." Christmas is our time to say "Thank you."

(by Mark Berg in Donald L. Deffner, *Seasonal Illustrations*, Resource, 1992, p. 21)