

# FAITH AND REASON

**The Seed-the Soil:** In Proverbs 8:22-31 we are given an astounding image of God as Hagia Sophia - Holy Wisdom. This reading reflects the evolution of Israel's understanding of Wisdom: 1) from being a series of counsels about how to succeed in life, 2) to the realization that these qualities were a gift of God and could only come from Him, 3) the next step was to realize that these qualities are in God to a supreme degree, 4) finally Wisdom came to be understood as the power by which God acts in the world, an offshoot of God himself. This is an appropriate backdrop for the parable of the Sower and the Seed (Mt. 13). Jesus compares the Life he gives us to the seed that is cast not the ground. This living seed is divine and, therefore, of its nature fruitful (c/f Isaiah 55:10-11). The parable clearly indicates that we are the soil. We, the soil, can help or hinder the seed, promote or hinder its growth. The life within us is divine, therefore it will grow, not simply because we are attending to it, but so long as we do not hinder it. Our prayer then should simply be "Lord, I hope and pray that I do not get in your way today."

The fact is, we do get in God's way, quite naturally, one has to say. From childhood we develop likes and dislikes, fears, hopes, desires, all of which are character-forming influences. For example: there is more to seeing than simply seeing. To see, to perceive, means to receive something into oneself, to submit to the influence of things, to place oneself within their grasp. The human will is the guardian of vision, not the eye! We look carefully at things or turn away from them, depending on our attitude of mind. The deeper our fear, the deeper our distaste for a person, place, or thing, the more tightly we close our eyes, until ultimately we become incapable of perceiving the truth. Then we have become so-to-speak blind to that person, event, thing. This is the seedbed of disruptive character traits: suspicion, envy, anger, moods, criticism.

Some people doggedly refuse to change such a lifestyle, the contention is that they do not have a problem, everyone else has the problems. Others change only when they hurt so much that they cannot live with themselves any longer. Those who strive to live responsible and mature lives know and accept the fact that we are not a law unto ourselves, that our lives must be measured by objective standards of reason and faith.

The following event illustrates the point in a much lighter vein: A man brought his boss home for dinner for the first time. The youngest child in the family, a boy, stared at the guest for the entire evening without uttering a word. Finally, the guest, a very blustery, arrogant, domineering sort of person, could endure the stress no longer, and said, "Sonny, why do you keep looking at me like that?" The guest should have "left well enough alone". If he could have known what was about to follow he would have done that precisely. The boy answered, "my dad said that you are a self-made man". The guest smiled proudly, raised himself up somewhat, and said that he was indeed a self-made man. The child continued, "Well if you are a self-made man... why did you make yourself like that?"... Now we go to Florence!

No visit to Florence, the cradle of the Renaissance, is complete unless one has seen the Michelangelo's statue of David. It is a masterpiece of marble, nine cubits high. The Statue has a fascinating history. About 100 years before Michelangelo, a huge block of Carrara marble was brought to Florence by a sculptor. He worked on it patiently, carving the image that was in his mind. Quite accidentally he cut a large slice off the side which, in his judgment, he rendered the marble useless. There the block of marble lay until Michelangelo saw it and saw all the possibilities that lay within the stone. Even the mutilation which rendered the marble useless for the original sculptor, became part of the new design. Michelangelo believed that his works owed their beauty to God and not himself. The work of art, according to Michelangelo, lay hidden in the marble, the sculptor had simply to cut away the stone that enclosed it. As he grew older, Michelangelo's attitude to his art became increasingly spiritual. "In order to copy to some extent the sacred likeness of the Lord," he told a friend, "it is not enough to have great mastery of painting and great wisdom. I think it is also necessary for the painter to be a good-living man, if possible, a saint, so that the Holy Spirit may inspire his soul". His contemporaries said, "He painted like an angel"... "The divine Michelangelo." The artistic world has openly declared that Michelangelo must have been divinely inspired when sculpting the Pieta. It is impossible to have such a highly developed artistic sense at the age of 21. His contemporaries said, "he painted like an angel!" Michelangelo had a fascinating attitude to sculpture. The task of the sculptor was to chip away the stone and thereby release the art form - the subject hidden in the stone. Can you not see Moses hidden in the stone? As it is with art, so it is with life itself. The human person is the pinnacle of God's creation: God's greatest work..... God's masterpiece! Can we see the "art form" hidden within the self? Are we willing to chip away at these attitudes, values, lifestyles; those narrow likes, dislikes, unreasonable fears, hopes, desires? As Michelangelo would say, to chip away all that "stone" so that the real self, the true art form can be "set free". ... God's masterpiece!...**Fr. William C. Mooney**

**Glory:** I will glory not because I am righteous, but because I am redeemed; I will glory not because I am free from sins, but because my sins are forgiven me. I will not glory because I have done good nor because someone has done good to me, but because Christ is my advocate with the Father and because the blood of Christ has been shed for me... **St. Ambrose**

**The Fiddler of Dooney:** When I play on my fiddle in Dooney, Folk dance like a wave of the sea; My cousin is priest in Kilvarnet, My brother in Moharabuiee. I passed my brother and cousin: They read in their books of prayer; I read in my book of songs I bought at the Sligo fair. When we come at the end of time, To Peter sitting in state, He will smile on the three old spirits, But call me first through the gate; For the good are always the merry, Save by an evil chance, And the merry love the fiddle And the merry love to dance: And when the folk there spy me, They will all come up to me, With 'Here is the fiddler of Dooney!' And dance like a wave of the sea.

**Mary:** There is, actually, only one person in all humanity of whom God has one picture and in whom there is a perfect conformity between what he wanted her to be and what she is, and that is his own mother. Most of us are a minus sign, in the sense that we do not fulfill the high hopes the heavenly Father has for us. But Mary is the equal sign. The ideal that God had of her, that she is, and in the flesh. The model and the copy are perfect; she is all that was foreseen, planned, and dreamed. The melody of her life is played just as it was written... **Archbishop Fulton Sheen**

#### **A Thought For the Day**

**Sunday** Jesus, help me to simplify my life by learning what you want me to be, and becoming that person.  
**Monday** We may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated.  
**Tuesday** To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart.  
**Wednesday** Be gentle to all, and stern with yourself.  
**Thursday** How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.  
**Friday** Imagination disposes of everything; it creates beauty, justice and happiness, which is everything in this world.  
**Saturday** Since when do you have to agree with people to defend them from injustice?

**The Church**, which has spread everywhere, even to the ends of the earth, received the faith from the apostles and their disciples ... Having one soul and one heart, the Church holds this faith, preaches, and teaches it consistently as though by a single voice. For though there are different languages, there is but one tradition. ... Just as God's creature, the sun, is one and the same the world over, so also does the Church's preaching shine everywhere to enlighten all men who want to come to a knowledge of the truth. Now of those who speak with authority in the churches, no preacher however forceful will utter anything different—for no one is above the Master—nor will a less forceful preacher diminish what has been handed down. Since our faith is everywhere the same, no one who can say more augments it, nor can anyone who says less diminish it... **St. Ignatius of Antioch**

**The Success of the Cross:** On the Cross Jesus saw love through to the end. For all the differences there may be between the accounts of the various Gospels, there is one point in common: Jesus died praying and, in the abyss, he upheld the first commandment and held on to the presence of God. Out of such a death springs this sacrament... the Eucharist.... Did Jesus fail? Success is not one of the names of God and it is not Christian to have an eye to outward success or numbers. God's paths are other than that. His success comes about through the Cross and is always found under that sign. The true witnesses to his authenticity, down through the centuries, are those who have accepted this sign as their emblem... What strengthens our faith, what remains constant, what gives us hope, is the Church of the suffering. She stands to the present day, as a sign that God exists and that man is not just a cesspit, but that he can be saved.... The Church of the suffering gives credibility to Christ: she is God's success in the world; the sign that gives hope and courage; the sign from which still flows the power of life, which reaches beyond mere thoughts of success, and which therefore purifies men and opens up for God a door into this world. So, let us be ready to hear the call of Jesus Christ, who achieved the great success of God on the Cross; he who, as the grain of wheat that died, has become fruitful down through all the centuries; the Tree of life, in whom even today men may put their hope... **Pope Benedict XVI**

*May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will also accomplish it. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24*

In His Will is Our Peace  
Fr. William C. Mooney

Spiritual Direction and Confession  
Email: [Fr.WCmooney@gmail.com](mailto:Fr.WCmooney@gmail.com)  
Appointments: (904) 315-8554  
Follow on Facebook: [Faith and Reason](#)  
Instagram: [faith\\_and\\_reason](#)