

FAITH AND REASON

The Samaritan Woman: Separating the two provinces Judea and Galilee was a strip of land inhabited by a semi-alien race called the Samaritans. Between them and the Jewish people there was a long-standing feud. The Samaritans were a hybrid race, formed centuries before, when the Israelites were sent into exile. The Assyrians sent some of their own people among them to mix with them and intermarry, thereby creating a new race. The first colonists of Samaria brought idolatry with them. Later a spurious form of Judaism developed. The Samaritans accepted the first five books of the Old Testament (Pentateuch) and some of the prophecies. All the other historical books were rejected because they recounted the story of the Jews whom they despised. Their place of worship was a temple on Mt Gerizim.

The usual route between Judea in the south and Galilee in the north was through Perea. The Jews took this route to avoid passing through the land of the Samaritans. Jesus, however, did not take this route on this occasion, because he wanted to meet his people and one person in particular. The hour was about noon. It was most unusual for a woman in the East to draw water at the hottest time of the day. The women of the village normally came to the well at the cooler time of the day --morning or evening. Her coming to the well at this time indicates that in all probability she was not accepted by the women of the village because of their state in life. The conversation began with a simple request, "Give me a drink". How utterly amazing that a meeting with God should take place in such circumstances. How surprising that a call to conversion should begin with the words "Give me a drink".

Conversion is a life-long process a daily struggle to become more like Christ our Savior. We must look for a "Damascus event" as the hallmark of an authentic conversion. Conversion is, except in the rarest of cases, a gradual process, of which we are not necessarily aware, because the operation of divine grace does not leave any ripple on the surface of our consciousness. Conversion, from the Latin, means a turning, but in what direction? Conversion is basically a change of mind, heart, and will... a change of person.

St James touches the nerve-end when he speaks of the person who is merely a hearer of the word, as being like the man who looks in a mirror and goes away forgetting what he has seen, forgetting what manner of man he is. This does not mean that he forgets the law and its requirements. On the contrary, it means that he caught a glimpse of the law in himself, in his inner nature, and went away forgetting the corruption he had seen. St. Paul in his letter to the Romans, states what seems to be an evasion of personal responsibility: "My action does not come from me, it comes from the sinful principle that dwells in me". St. Paul is actually directing our attention to the tendency that evil lies in every person because of original sin, and finally to the hidden self, to the real self.

It is this hidden nature that is there all the time, and we forget it is there. It is this hidden nature that we love all the time and forget that we are loving it. It lashes out when we are annoyed. It reaches out when we are allured by something, it rears up when we are insulted. It comes to the surface when we are drunk. Sin, therefore, lies deep in the psyche, and it is something of which we are only partly conscious. This is why Lent brings with it a message of the utmost importance. Let us be concerned with the mystery of redemption, on which our hope rests. At once we meet the word "mystery". We are beyond the limits of human philosophy, human goodness, human love. We are faced with the mystery of divine love and, like it or not, the mystery of sin.

The heart of Revelation is that God loves us in such a way, that he will not leave us in our sin, God cannot love evil, he has to make us lovable. God's love is a redemptive love. A love concerned with sinners and with sin. The true God cannot abide what is false and insincere. The Holy God cannot tolerate sin in those he loves. Therefore, we cannot have God's will and our will, we cannot have sin and God. One of the greatest dangers facing the modern world is the loss of a sense of sin. The loss of a sense of sin - of a sense of what is morally right and morally wrong, has brought empires down, it has ruined civilizations. "In a world fraught with the ruins of civilizations, what is so immortal about yours"?

Bishop Sheen is explicit and emphatic on this point: "Sin is the abandonment of God by man: it is the creature forsaking the Creator, as a flower might abandon the sunlight which gave it strength and beauty. Sin is a separation, a divorce, the original divorce from unity with God, whence all divorces are derived. If you choose to offend God, successful you may be, honored you may be, rich you may be, praised by the world you may be, 'broadminded' and 'progressive' you may be, you may be alive to public opinion and the new morals of the day, but you will never know how much you have failed, as Barabbas never knew how much he had failed the day of his success. But you will be dead, dead to the life of Christ, dead to the love of God, dead to the ageless peacefulness of eternity.

Jesus - God Incarnate, sat at a well, in the hot midday sun, because he wanted to meet and speak to one soul, who is simply described as a "Samaritan woman". Jesus speaks directly to her heart, even to the point of gently telling her that she has five husbands. The example of Jesus is in contrast to that of many of his followers who are more concerned with feelings more than with truth. Let us always "do the truth in love" gently, kindly, respectfully. Let us also strive to listen to the truth in love, as Jesus speaks to us in love through his Church. **Fr. William C. Mooney**

I would, then, that I could convince spiritual persons that this road to God consists not in a multiplicity of meditations nor in ways or methods of such, nor in consolations, although these things may in their own way be necessary to beginners; but that it consists only in the one thing that is needful, which is the ability to deny oneself truly, according to that which is without and to that which is within, giving oneself up to suffering for Christ's sake . . . For progress comes not save through the imitation of Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no man comes to the Father but by Him....**St. John of the Cross**

Realize it, my brethren; everyone who breathes, high and low, educated and ignorant, young and old, man and woman, has a mission, has a work. We are not sent into this world for nothing; we are not born at random; God sees every one of us; He creates every soul, He lodges it in the body, one by one, for a purpose. He needs, He deigns to need, every one of us. He has an end for each of us; we are all equal in His sight, and we are placed in our different ranks and stations, not to get what we can out of them for ourselves, but to labor in them for Him. As Christ has His work, we too have ours; as He rejoiced to do His work, we must rejoice in ours also.... **St. John Henry Newman**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday	Through her heart, His sorrow sharing. All His bitter anguish bearing. Now at length the sword has passed.
Monday	O, how sad and sore depressed, Was that Mother highly blessed, Of the sole Begotten One.
Tuesday	Christ above in torment hangs. She beneath beholds the pangs of her dying, glorious Son.
Wednesday	Is there one who would not weep? 'whelmed in miseries so deep, Christ's dear Mother to behold.
Thursday	Can the human heart refrain, From partaking in her pain, In that Mother's pain untold?
Friday	Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled. She beheld her tender Child, All with bloody scourges rent.
Saturday	For the sins of His own nation, Saw Him hang in desolation, Till His spirit forth He sent.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me...**St. Patrick**

Each of us must come to the evening of life. Each of us must enter eternity. Each of us must come to that quiet, awful time, when we will appear before the Lord of the vineyard, and answer for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad. That, my dear brethren, you will have to undergo. ... It will be the dread moment of expectation when your fate for eternity is in the balance, and when you are about to be sent forth as the companion of either saints or devils, without possibility of change. There can be no change; there can be no reversal. As that judgment decides it, so it will be for ever and ever. Such is the particular judgment. ... when we find ourselves by ourselves, one by one, in his presence, and have brought before us most vividly all the thoughts, words, and deeds of this past life. Who will be able to bear the sight of himself? And yet we shall be obliged steadily to confront ourselves and to see ourselves. In this life we shrink from knowing our real selves. We do not like to know how sinful we are. We love those who prophecy smooth things to us, and we are angry with those who tell us of our faults. But on that day, not one fault only, but all the secret, as well as evident, defects of our character will be clearly brought out. We shall see what we feared to see here, and much more. And then, when the full sight of ourselves comes to us, who will not wish that he had known more of himself here, rather than leaving it for the inevitable day to reveal it all to his!.. **Saint John Henry Newman**

No one denies what everyone knows, for nature herself teaches it: that God is the Creator of the universe, and that it is good, and that it belongs to humanity by the free gift of its Creator. But there is a vast difference between the corrupted state and the state of primal purity, just as there is a vast difference between Creator and the corruptor. ... We ourselves, though we're guilty of every sin, are not just a work of God: we're image. Yet we have cut ourselves off from our Creator in both soul and body. Did we get eyes to serve lust, the tongue to speak evil, ears to hear evil, a throat for gluttony, a stomach to be gluttony's ally, hands to do violence, genitals for unchaste excesses, feet for an erring life? Was the soul put in the body to think up traps, fraud, and injustice? I don't think so...

"Keep the joy of loving God in your heart and share this joy with all you meet, especially your family. Be holy...—St. Teresa of Calcutta

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

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