**Who Are You?**

While you are thinking, I’ll tell you about an interview some years ago with Boris Yeltsin, the former president of the Soviet Union. He was asked who inspired him to stand strong while the Communist government collapsed around him. He said he was inspired by Lech Walesa, the head of the Solidarity Movement in Poland, a former electrician who went on to become president.

Lech Walesa was interviewed and asked who inspired him to lead the Polish people against the powerful Communist regime. He said he was inspired by Martin Luther King, Jr., the head of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.

Martin Luther King, Jr., was interviewed and asked who inspired him to help usher in this needed social reform in the U.S. He said he was inspired by Rosa Parks, the woman who refused to move to the back of the bus. Is it too much of a stretch to say that a small woman from the south of the United States was responsible for the fall of communism?

Rosa Parks knew who she was. Who are you?

While you are thinking, I’ll tell you about a hero of mine. He’s a Redemptorist priest from Belgium by the name Albert Lamote. He had been a prisoner of war in Belgium during World War II. He escaped; he was recaptured. He joined the Redemptorists after the war and spent over 60 years serving in the Caribbean. He just died three years ago at the age of 96-years-young.

We were together in Dominica on a priest’s retreat lead by Bishop Sidney Charles from Grenada. On the first day, Bishop Charles asked us to introduce ourselves, to tell everyone who we were. Most of us mumbled something like, “My name is Kevin MacDonald. I’m the assistant parish priest in the parish of LaSoie.” When it got around the room to Father Lamote, I remember him standing up straight and saying in a clear voice: “My name is Albert Lamote and I am a citizen of heaven.”

Father Lamote knew who he was. Who are you?

The Gospel of Mark contains a question and a principle that lies at the heart of our Christian faith. The question is the one that Jesus asked the apostles: “Who do you say that I am?” Peter, of course, gives the answer: “You are the Christ.” But what exactly did that term mean in Peter’s imagination? What did it mean to the early Christians? What has it meant over the last 2,000 years? What does it mean to you?

The Church has refined her answer over the years. Today we would say that Christ is the one in whom we find the fullness of divinity. In other words, everything that it means to say, “The Father is God,” we can say about the Son who is incarnate in Jesus. But we know that not only do we find the fullness of divinity, but we find full humanity. So that when we look to Jesus we see One who is like us in everything except sin.

So what we would say in response to Jesus’ question, “Who do you say that I am?” is: “You are the one who shows us that the fullness of divinity is to be found in a human being.” And the fullness of humanity is to be glimpsed only when we see the reality of God.

If you want to know what it means to say the word, “God,” look at this Person; look at the life, death, and destiny of Jesus of Nazareth. At the same time, if you want to know what it is to be human, if you want to know who you are or who I am at our very best, at our very fullest, look at this Person, look at the life, death, and destiny of Jesus of Nazareth.

The fullness of God is found in the fullness of humanity. And vice versa — the fullness of humanity is found in the fullness of God. And what flows from that is that all-important principle that is at the heart of our Christian faith: Anything which helps us become more fully, richly, perfectly, splendidly human is making us more like God. Whatever humanizes, divinizes. Whatever makes us more human, makes us holy.

And what flows from that is the lesson that Our Lord tried to impart to his disciples throughout his ministry, which is simply: If we hold onto our lives, if we try to preserve them, to grasp them tightly and not let them go — if we deny others free access — we will lose them. But if we give them away, if we hand them over, if we are willing to die, then we will discover that we can never, ever, run out of life. If we hold onto them, we lose them. If we give them away, they become everlasting.

Perhaps an image from Dante’s Divine Comedy would help. In the 100th canto, the very last section, Dante tries to do the impossible. He tries to describe the Beatific Vision. He tries to describe what it is like to see God. And, needless to say, he fails. He just fails less than anybody else who has ever tried.

Dante says that what he saw was a dazzling light. Now that is a familiar image for others who have tried to describe God, but Dante goes on to say that the dazzlingly bright light that seemed to destroy his eyesight eventually made it stronger and clearer. The light seemed to come from three concentric spheres of different colors, together forming a dazzlingly white light. And as he gazed more deeply into this light, at its very center, he saw One who looked just like him.

Of course, Dante is describing the Incarnation. He sees the fullness of humanity united to the fullness of divinity in the Person of Christ. And then he says in that remarkable last line of the canto: “Then I knew the Love that moves the sun and all the stars.”

What unites us with God is our humanity. Thanks to the Incarnation, you and I and God have one thing in common: we are all human. And, therefore, if you wish to be like God, be more human. And the way to be more human is to help others be more human. And the way to do that is to give ourselves away.

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