

+ J. M. J.

This week my dad invited me on his boat on Wednesday. We were going to take a trip to Port Huron. You might remember that it was particularly windy on Wednesday. We were trying to decide what to do. The forecast said that the wind would not subside until 4:00, so we decided to leave. A couple of minutes later we found ourselves battling to stay on course and hitting a buoy.

I recalled this when I was rereading C. S. Lewis. He makes the point that taking shortcuts cost us more in the long run. By being lazy we eventually have to work harder.<sup>1</sup> Cheap winds up being more expensive, and in our case, in hurrying things we arrived at our destination later; actually, we never arrived at all.

In the Gospel Jesus tells us that we are to take up our crosses daily and follow him. That doesn't sound very attractive. Last week I mentioned that Jesus wants everything. He wants our whole self, our whole life, our every thought, our every moment, all of our possessions, our finances, our passions. Everything we have is meant to give glory to God. In essence denying myself means giving up my will and doing whatever God wills, which ironically will make me happier in the long run. It took me a long time to figure this out. Nobody ever told me this in all my years of Catholic school it wasn't until I was on a silent retreat that my director corrected me and told God doesn't want a part of your life your willing to give him. He wants it all.

Here's C. S. Lewis's point. We live our lives as if we can give God a portion, doing some good here or there, taking time for prayer in a portion of our day or a portion of our week. In other words we remain "ourselves" with our own goals of money, pleasure, ambition, or whatever while at the same time hoping to be virtuous. That is exactly what we cannot do.<sup>2</sup> St. Paul tells us "all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." In other words by our baptism we now "belong to Christ." We are to be completely transformed. Jesus says in the Gospel one cannot get grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles (Matt. 7:21). We cannot bear fruit until we become capable of bearing

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<sup>1</sup> *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics, Mere Christianity*, 157.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

fruit which is when we surrender our lives completely and become something new; we are literally to be Christ in the world.

Why the cross, why the suffering? It is not the only reason, but God uses and allows certain things to happen in our lives precisely because they get our attention. They help us refocus on the goal. When we lose something of lesser value we appreciate things of greater value. When we realize our finiteness we turn our minds to eternity.

Somewhere in all this we get discouraged. We think surely we can't be happy if I give this part of my life or that part of my life over to God, whatever this or that part of my life happens to be. But it winds up being that by clinging to things that we are not willing to part with we become less happy over time. We wind up having to work harder in the long run. If we remain lukewarm God it takes longer for what God wishes to do, to set our souls on fire for him. C. S. Lewis uses the analogy, it is difficult for an egg to turn into a bird. Wouldn't it though be impossible for a bird to learn to fly while remaining an egg? We are like eggs. We either hatch or we go bad.<sup>3</sup>

As we call down the Holy Spirit to turn bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, let's take some prayerful moments to review our lives. What have we given over to God? What is God still asking of us to give? Jesus tells us in the Sermon on the Mount be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. It is not our doing but Jesus changing us from within. This day whatever Jesus asks us to surrender, whatever cross Jesus asks us to bear, let us ask for the graces necessary to give, to be transformed.

May God bless you.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.