

GLIMPSE

Being Noble

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In the history of the human experience of being governed the most usual form has been Royal Dominion, which is a king or queen having sway over their subjects. Nobility was the form, but not always the substance including some segments of the history. The present Pope seems not to find comfort in the princely chair where more than a few presumed that nobility was the same as domination and self-posturing.

People of nobility in the secular sense gracefully hovered above the masses with disgracefully avoiding much of the human condition. The term "noble" has attracted my attention lately and this term has many faces. Stately, gentle, of good stock, self-sacrificing, courageous, might be some ways of expressing a noble personage. My fear is that when the Founding Persons of the democracy of the United States, when they threw over and threw out the regal nobility forms of earlier times, the concept of noble went into the Boston harbor with the tea.

One definition I might offer for this sense of being noble I witnessed recently during a two-day wake followed by a funeral in Toronto. Let me say this with simplicity, a noble person when approaching the surviving persons, faces her/his verbal and emotional poverty and knows how to express grief or sadness with gestures, eye-contact, even tears and then moves along.

It is ignoble to say words of poor theology or flowery piety meant to cover up one's own inability to explain the mysterious unexplainable. I actually heard people say, "She's better off now." "God wanted her more than we deserved." "I do know exactly how you feel, my husband died last year." This last is the worst, because it takes away the unique and individual pain of the one whose suffering is hardly even known by him/her.

In this definition of being noble I emphasize showing up for the pain, the loss and the awkwardness of love. Being noble is being present without hiding behind fancy words and comforting cushions. The person who can show up for the pain of others

has shown up for his/her own pains and sorrows and knows well that they cannot be reasoned or even faithed away. We believe in the resurrection, but the unresurrected live in hope and hope hurts. Those who can live with hurt-hope feel deeply, too deeply for many words. No Theology or spirituality ever wiped away tears. It is a blessing to be noble of heart. The noble person shows up and does not avoid the poverty within the human condition. That person has been nobled by facing, surrendering, receiving pain and loss and by not hiding from them; standing in the presence of others peacefully and nobly. It is just a glimpse and maybe with too many words.