Conversion of the Heart

Sean Powers

One of the reasons I came to Creighton was the large focus on community involvement and service. It is true that we do a lot of service in our surrounding communities. But why do we do it? What is our motivation?

In the first reading from Joel, the Lord says "Return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning." There are many ways to Christ's compassionate heart; fasting, mourning, and weeping are just some of the ways. In today's terms fasting can mean sacrificing a convenient meal at Brandeis for one with the poor and homeless at the Sienna Francis House. Mourning can mean offering up your emotional, physical, or spiritual pain to God's comfort in the hope of his aid. Weeping can mean being along side a friend who is suffering and suffering with them. Thousands of years after the words of the Bible were written down we find ourselves struggling along side others as they grow in the Lord through the pains of life.

But the key to our spiritual growth into God's compassionate heart does not simply come from attending weekly service, building a house, or sitting along side the dying. The spiritual journey flourishes from the conversion of one's whole heart.

In the Gospel from Matthew, ultimately the performing of religious acts is not the end that brings us closer to God. It is the conversion of our hearts as we do those acts that brings us, together, to the Kingdom of Christ's love. Doing such deeds in silence creates an easier environment to concentrate on the conversion of one's heart.

So, as Creighton continues to be a University committed to doing service and justice in our communities, what is our end? Is it the knowledge we are "doing good?" Is it for a fuller résumé? Hopefully in our service we will take the time to reflect upon the greater end of service, the conversion of hearts—both ours and those whom we serve.

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Interested in Magis?

We're looking to build a core team of people interested in writing for, putting together, and promoting the Magis Student Bulletin next year.

Interested? Come to the

Information Night

Wednesday, 28 February
9:00 p.m. • Lower St. John's, Old Kitchen
Human Emotion
Michael McKenny

The readings for Ash Wednesday convey something that all people can relate to, which is human emotion. In the first reading, Joel speaks of the Israelites being separated from Yahweh due to sinning against him. They were so in misery without Yahweh that they declared a fast for everyone to adhere to just so they can be reunited with Yahweh.

Just as the Israelites were when separated from Yahweh, so are we when we are separated from our loved ones (or Grey’s Anatomy...whatever). We miss them and wish we could see them at any cost necessary.

Paul runs with the idea of human emotion when writing to the Corinthians. He speaks of trying to live up to unbelievable expectations and longing for salvation. Trying to live up to what God has made us for is unattainable because he called us to follow him and we cannot always do that because we sin. However, what Paul also tells us is that God knows this because Jesus died for our sins and therefore has purchased for us salvation. God is acting like his title, The Father. In that, much like my own father, he comforts me and tells me that I can do anything as long as I have faith in what I am doing. If we have faith in God, we will attain salvation as Paul says.

Finally Jesus gives us the floor plans on what we are supposed to do when we are performing fasting acts. What Jesus prescribes is the hardest of all emotions that humans possess, humility. It is so easy to exalt yourself and to blow your own horn in public. Doesn’t it feel good to be praised for your good deeds? Indeed it does. But alas, Jesus says when giving alms give so that your left hand does not know what your right hand is doing. When praying, go in a locked inner room, so that no one but the Father will hear you. And when fasting, wash your face so as not to give any indication of fasting, so that only the Father knows that you are fasting. Jesus always concludes each of these points by promising that, “The Father will surely repay you.”

As you can see, all the readings have possessed an underlying theme of what we are suppose to do with our emotions. From longing for a loved one to humility, it is always good to know that Christ knows how we are feeling and we can always ask for help when we are in need.

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The Echo of Ashes
“Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.”

the large brown bowl
rests on a purple cloth
its roundness holding ashes
freshly burned
black and ready for wearing.

blackened thumbs
press the ancient sign
upon waiting foreheads.

I hear the message repeated
until it haunts and haunts me down:
remember, remember, remember
you are dust, dust, only dust
some day only dust will remain.

the echo of the tent-stained ashes
speaks the truth of my humanity:
the humbleness of my beginning,
the simplicity of my departure.

A few wise words
echoing through Ash Wednesday
urge me to deeper things:
renewed dedication,
constant compassion,
and mindful awareness.

I leave marveling
at how simple and sublime
is this envelope of the soul,
which one day returns
to dust, dust, only dust.

Joyce Rupp

Mark Your Calendar

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