

April 22, 2020

Hart Island just offshore from the borough of The Bronx in New York City has been a burial site for 151 years. I first learned of it in the 80's when legions of men, mostly young, died of AIDS alone and unwanted and Hart Island became their final resting place.

Today because the overwhelming number of deaths from the virus, it is the final resting place of many who have no one to claim their mortal remains or lack the funds for a less functional burial and it is, also now, a temporary burial place until there is the opportunity for families to observe more conventional funeral rites.

The mechanics of all of that are truly tragic and sad which brings me again to think about what happens when we die.

Just like most of you, I want to think that when I die my self-conscious self will remain self-conscious as will the self-conscious selves of all the people I care about and love, in fact, I would like everyone to remain self-conscious when they die, so when we get to heaven I can point out the stupidity of so many people and show how right and correct I was.

Just take note of the fact that the self we know is often not our real self as God created us and often not at all the self that most other people know.

And that is the problem with that kind of dualistic thinking, it is all about me and with me nothing has changed if when I die, I get to settle scores or receive the praise and specialness that I feel I deserve but didn't receive when I was alive.

I believe that what happens to us after death needs to be considered with wonder and awe, not wishful thinking or fantasy, and by that, I

mean that we have to allow for a not knowing with our heads but a trusting with our hearts.

We have to admit and element of mystery and most of us have a hard time with mystery but we are, as difficult as it is, learning these days to live into the unknown with Mystery, I believe, our self-consciousness is being tempered and it doesn't feel good all of the time.

Those folks being buried on Hart Island and those awful mechanical scenes, just as the folks in Italy, their ashes mingled together in mass cremations, are us as creatures made in the image and likeness of God.

Hold them, all of them, with respectful thoughts and serious mystery, and pray, however you pray, for those among us working to unravel the mystery of this virus.

And if you want to learn about how to be less self-conscious, pray, however you pray, for the medical workers and those who respond and care in so many ways to the sick and the dying.

Amen

PS Try studying the after-death customs, practices, and beliefs of non-Christian people and you will be enlightened.