

June 8, 2020

I once told you about Timothy Egan's book, **A Pilgrimage to Eternity**, a journal of his pilgrimage called since Medieval times the Via Francigena which he walked, actually walked, most of the time from Canterbury, England, to Rome. The book is filled with all kinds of anecdotes and insights into people, places, and things and his descriptions of some of his meals will leave you ravenous.

I find great value in the historical insights he brings to the places that he visits, he traces customs and legends and religious pieties of all sorts back to their origins and in so doing he uncovers how facts can become fictions and fictions become facts and how popular piety creates many, many gods and works of god, that have no basis in reality.

An inadequate or immature respect for history confuses a healthy hierarchy of values in how religious faith is offered and how it is received.

I am aware that many would think that the God I talk about and the works of God that I believe in have no basis in reality but I try to use the New Testament especially the Gospels as the basis for what I say and what I believe. If a belief or an idea associated with the Catholic Tradition can not be found to have some relationship to or with those texts, I am skeptical of its value to my faith.

Egan uses the term "lapsed but listening" to describe his relationship with the Catholic Church and his general relationship to God and religion.

He does not go out of his way to dig up Catholic dirt, he is not advocating for belief or unbelief, he does not make religion or religious questions and issues central to his journey but does acknowledge that his pilgrimage has been undertaken by legions of people in the past and that the Via Francigena serves today as a means of reflecting on or seeking the value, meaning, and purpose of life and all that might go into a life.

"Lapsed but listening" gives authority to the "listener" more than the "speaker" and that often makes institutional leadership uncomfortable because religious institutions, the leaders of religious institutions, especially, like to have the last word and not concede authority to individual believers.

“Lapsed but listening” is a healthy approach in these times to our faith lives as ideological agendas and concerns have co-opted visible aspects of organized religion with issues that are not really rooted in the Gospel vision of the Kingdom of God that Jesus sent us to teach is at hand.

The “for profit religious education/faith formation” institutes and industries are like dishonest used car salesmen who turn back the odometers on cars to make you think you are getting something valuable when what you are actually doing is enriching them.

I suspect that as we go forward after our time apart there will be a lot of Catholics “lapsed but listening.” I suspect our Catholic bubbles will have broken in some places and I, also, suspect not a few both young and old will be on a pilgrimage to seek the value, meaning, and purpose of their life even if they thought they had it all figured out.