

August 4, 2020

I have suggested previously that when we experience trauma our recovery relies very much on caring for ourselves as quite often victims blame themselves for their trauma. We just have a hard time undoing that hardwired tape of negative judgments about ourselves in a myriad of ways that runs in the background of our days and we feel that somehow, twisted and dysfunctional as it may be, we deserved what happened to us.

The initial trauma is being born when we are forced out of our protected and familiar environment into a cold bright and strange new environment without any choice in the matter and then we have to learn to accept all kinds of weird facial movements and sounds and decide if they are friendly and benevolent or mean with an intent to cause us harm.

And so goes the rest of our lives and if we are careful and we do trust we do find places of solace and safety, faces and voices and touch that reach the deepest wells and cisterns of our souls and we flourish but for a time because even if those wells and cisterns prove reliably benevolent, people and places that nurture and call forth peace and joy, even if...

Everything, everything, is temporary.

So, we need to be prepared by developing habits and, I think, rituals of self-care, now in these days we all live with trauma and we all need to care for ourselves and try, as is our nature, to care for others for if we do not take care of ourselves we will lash out and hurt ourselves, hurt one another, do terrible damage to the project of being human in a troubled world because we succumb to the doubt or, worse, denial, that the fragile prospect that we are good, that we are worthy of love, and that our love for one another is not in vain.

I mean this, it is crucial that we get intentional about caring for ourselves these days, in some small, personal, but meaningful manner.

The Sacraments of the Catholic Church are in their origin rituals that came from the human imagination touched by Grace to sustain us on our journeys with a tangible feeling of the Love and Providence of God.

The Eucharist was never a private affair of an individual but a Real Presence of Salvation and Redemption by Divine Love for all, but in this time and this place with these Beloved Children of God doubting that they are worthy of love and eternal care.

The fact that the Sacraments were appropriated as the domain of clerics to be regulated and accessed with rubrical scrutiny is troubling but, in my mind and my experience, that has not prevented Christ from working and being in Eyes Not His Own but in surprising faces and places bringing solace in the face of desolation.

Our ancestors developed all manner of “sacramental” care rituals, people and places and things that hinted at, anticipated, suggested, the Real Presence of Love and Providence, that could provide a sabbath in the midst of trauma when we could not gather in Sacred Assembly on the shores and grasses of Life and Love.

Where do you think ice cream came from? Eclairs? Croissants? Potato salad, macaroni salad and egg salad? Meatloaf? Chocolate cake? Rice pudding, tapioca, and apple slices, cherry slices, and peanut butter oatmeal raisin cookies?

Beer, wine, vodka, gin, bourbon, scotch whiskey, and cognac, Armagnac, slivovitz, aquavit, sake?

The proliferation of craft beer, pizza, and banana bread aficionados in these times of pandemic is but one example of a “sacramental” presence at work, in my mind.

Many rituals of the past and the present involved the use of vegetation that could change consciousness and perception in sacred settings with ritual boundaries in place to assure self-care and self-renewal.

Poetry, music, drama, literature, even, motion pictures, television, in their own way came about to sustain and encourage us in times of trauma, loss, and distress.

And while any of these that I have mentioned can be a source of suffering and pain when used to numb us to our trauma or deny trauma, their proper use

doesn't numb but uplifts us to start again, to not lose heart, to be faithful to the call, the origin and the destiny which is the Love that never abandons, is always present, and awaits, always awaits as we depart.

Be care full my Friend, be care full!

Remember the hungry, the newly jobless and homeless, the broken hearted, the broken and bruised, the arrogant and mindless the soulless and heartless, pray for us all!