

The Fork in the Road has Four Basic Options

PARKWAY CLOSING

2007 Summer Detours, Restrictions, and Options

As the summer draws to a close, so too does the work on the parkway — work that was sure to boost tourism in the Pittsburgh area. Thankfully, our God is a compassionate God. And once again, affirmation is given that only two things last forever (other than God himself) — heaven and hell.

The closures, restrictions, and detours provided us with few options. These were, simply put:

- 1) stay at home;
- 2) take the alternate routes that we know and pray that construction wasn't happening there;
- 3) sit in the parkway traffic and become upset during our crawl through the work zone;
- 4) follow the detours and learn of new restaurants, shops, and streets we didn't know existed.

The decision appropriate for us on a particular day, at a particular time, was never an easy decision, but one that we were forced to make.

Deciding whether to practice the awareness of the presence of God in our lives is much the same. We can easily:

- 1) do absolutely nothing — and stay at home — complaining because God is not doing a better job;
- 2) hold to those infamous “shortcuts” that we think “God understands” when we turn to God only in our need, and appropriate daily prayer time is not taken to strengthen our union with God;
- 3) sit locked-in place, expecting our prayer to produce certain results even though our prayer life has not developed beyond what was learned as children;
- 4) open ourselves to the opportunities God is providing that allow us see and respond to life as God does, for us to see new vistas and opportunities previously thought impossible.

The underlining questions will always be:

Do I wish to seek, or not seek, an awareness of the presence of God in my life in all things at all times? Do I desire one life which defines the completeness of myself — human and divine sharing? Do I wish to realize the fullness of life — mine and God's as one?

As it has been mentioned in earlier inserts, God cannot be removed from our lives. God may be ignored in our living of life. But God cannot be removed by anything we do, no matter how desperately we desire it. This is not our choice. It is God's choice

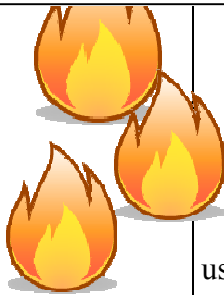


to be present to us. And just as we cannot change another person's thinking (unless they so choose to allow it) we cannot change God's plan. Remember, God is the concert master, the virtuoso, the painter (see previous inserts). God is “The Doer” in all of life.

GOD FIRST

Year Two, Part 5

The Prayer of Awareness



Our doing absolutely nothing restricts or eliminates our sharing of life. We become insular, crabby, and incapable of ever being pleased. So choosing the first option

just doesn't work if we're serious about our relationship with God and all of creation.

The second option helps us break “the routine” but it is still “our way” of encountering God. It is busy with creating ways of getting to God that take the least amount of time, and make us believe we're appeasing God.

The third option is synonymous with the Pittsburgh Parking Lot known as the Parkway East. We become absorbed into the collective “mass” where the sharing of life is relegated to us becoming overheated, perhaps because it's not the way we like it, wasting precious time, feeling God doesn't need much time from us, and failing to realize that it is us who need more time with our God.

Finally, we can choose the fourth option and open ourselves to new prayer possibilities, and then discover an intimacy with God that reveals far more than we ever thought possible. This is when our union with God grows drastically. The gifts given by the Spirit are seen more clearly in heart and mind. God is bringing to completion the wholeness of our person.

The choice to practice the awareness of the presence of God, or to ignore it, will always be an individual one.

That said, we must always be aware that, although it is an individual choice, it is meant for God,

ourselves, and all of creation, since the choice of God requires that we choose all that is of God — there is not a “pick-and-choose” mentality here!

It requires that we see the presence of God in individuals and in all of the created wonder of our God. Therefore, the choice to practice the presence of God will move us to universal responses rather than individual preferences — to act more and more in mind and heart with God.

So beware.

It is a choice we must make.

If chosen, it will change us and how we respond to God and all of life.

And it will move us in new, unexpected and wonderful ways.

The best part is that we only need to make the choice and honestly work at seeking the presence of God. God does everything else.

Yes, life will become an ongoing prayer as we move from activity to activity. And yes, we’ll see our responses to life change as well.



As a Review

This is much of what the first maxim invites us to see in our lives, and to make a part of life.

The ability to see God in every aspect of life is reason to simply pray:

“Thank you Lord for your presence.”

Or

“Praise you Lord for created beauty.”

Or

“You are here Lord.”

Or

“May I focus on your presence today Lord.”

Faith leads the heart, hope provides us with new vision and purpose, and love brings it to completion within our lives. Perseverance is the key, even when we feel we’ve not done as well as we could or should.

The Spiritual Maxims of Brother Lawrence

All things are possible to one who believes, even more to one who hopes, and still more to one who loves; but all things are even more possible to one who practices these three virtues (faith, hope, and love) and perseveres in them. All who are baptized believers have made the first step on the road that leads to perfection, and will be perfect providing they persevere in the practice of the following guides to their conduct.

(Each of these four guides will be discussed in detail in the weeks to come. Do not think these are extreme until they have been fully explained.)

First. We must always keep our eyes on God and his glory in all we do, say or undertake. May the goal toward which we strive be to become perfect worshipers of God in this life, just as we hope to be throughout all eternity. Resolve firmly to overcome, by the grace of God, all the difficulties found in the spiritual life.

Second. When we undertake the spiritual life we must consider in depth who we are, and we will find ourselves worthy of all scorn, unworthy of the name of Christian, and subject to all sorts of afflictions and countless misfortunes. We will find that these woes not only trouble us but also make us uncertain in our health, in our moods, and in our inner and outward dispositions. In short, we will find ourselves among those whom God chooses to make humble through an abundance of sufferings and travails, both within and without.

Third. We must believe beyond any doubt that it is to our advantage to sacrifice ourselves to God and that He is pleased by our sacrifice. It is normal in His divine Providence that we should be abandoned to all sorts of conditions, sufferings, afflictions and temptations for the love of God, as much and for as long as it is His will. Without this submission of heart and spirit to the will of God, there can be no devotion or going on to perfection.

Fourth. A soul is all the more dependent on grace as it aspires to higher perfection, and the help and assistance of God are all the more necessary to us every moment because without Him the soul can do nothing. The world, the flesh and the devil all combine to make such a strong and continual war against the soul that without the very present help of God and our humble and necessary dependence upon Him, they would carry it away in spite of itself. To our nature this seems harsh, but grace takes pleasure in being dependent upon God and finds its rest in Him.