

Advent III December 17, 2017 St Columba St Bride

‘LET a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.’ This is a profound saying of St. Paul: it is profound in its absolute simplicity. As we know that we have been good stewards of the mysteries of God, so we also know and understand that His judgement is fair and true: thereby able to enter into the halls of justice with clear conscience and an untroubled mind...can’t we?

Now, you might ask how can we be good stewards of the Mysteries of God? What is a ‘good steward’? This is all tied in with those two great commandments: especially the second, ‘Love thy neighbour as thyself’, where it is only by loving thyself, warts and all, that you can learn what it is to love thy neighbour – warts and all... The answer to the questions might be illustrated by this anonymous verse, which came into my hands from my father:

Myself

I have to live with myself and so
I want to be fit for myself to know,
I want to be able as the days go by
Always to look myself in the eye;
I don’t want to stand with the setting sun
And hate myself for the things I have done

I don’t want to keep on the closet shelf
A lot of secrets about myself,
And fool myself, as I come and go,
Into thinking that nobody else will know
The kind of man that I really am;
I don’t want to dress myself up in a sham.

I want to go out with my head held erect,
I want to deserve all men’s respect;
But here in the struggle for fame and help
I want to be able to like myself.
I don’t want to look at myself and know
That I’m bluster and bluff and empty show.

I can never hide myself from me,
I see what others may never see
I know what others may never know,
I can never fool myself, and so
Whatever happens, I want to be
Self-respecting, and conscience free.

(Author unknown)

In an earlier homily, I spoke of the necessity for that clear conscience, and the role which the Anglican Catholic church places on the individual confessions: I am always so impressed by the words of the exhortation on page 90 of the BCP: ‘ And because it is requisite, that no man should come to the holy Communion, but with a full trust in God’s mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore if there be any of you, who by this means cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet

Minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word, he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with spiritual counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and the avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.'

For the role of the clear conscience is all tied up with the cleansing of the stains of sin from the wedding garment: the purifying of the soul – the elimination of the stains of darkness so that you are fit to greet the return of the Lord our Saviour: and that you are so very prepared to welcome Jesus Christ on His Nativity to life with us and for us, in the coming week.

DRM+