

THE CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

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OWING AND GIVING, EPISODES AND OUTCOMES

Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's. This is one of the better known sayings of Jesus. But what exactly belongs to God?

Let us approach this question by looking at the history of God's creation. Scientists have calculated that the universe is between 13 and 14 billion years old; the earth 4 billion; and that life on earth began 2 billion years ago. Most scientists think that humanity began about 200,000 years ago. The universe, the world and humans came about through evolution. There is no reason to assume that evolution has stopped. Thus, we live in a world that is unfinished. Evolution means that humans are placed in a world that is evolving and developing. This has implications for the task of humans in terms of what we owe to God.

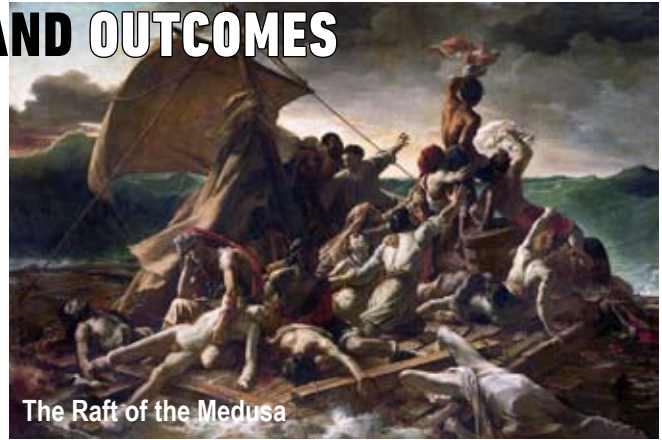
The world still knows hunger, disease, war and other causes of human suffering. Many things in society need improvement. That being said, we may recognize that humans have come a long way. It took many generations to reach the comfortable level of living we enjoy here in Canada today. Generation after generation of humankind tried to overcome obstacles to their survival, from shortage of food to diseases and wars. Obstacles have always been part of human progress on earth and this is likely to continue into the future.

This idea of slowly overcoming obstacles seems supported in the Bible. On the very first page of the Bible, in Genesis we read; that God made "mankind in his own image, in the image of God He created them." Moreover, Genesis tells us that God blessed mankind and told mankind "be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it." Subduing the earth does not mean exploiting the world. Subduing the earth, I would argue, means something quite different, namely: God wishes that mankind makes the world a better, more comfortable place to live in.

What does this imply for each one of us? Being charitable? Giving to those in need? Supporting medical research to fight diseases?

Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians: "if I give all my possessions to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing." Paul says that charity, even practiced to the extreme, is worth very little without love. Unconditional love of others is a very high ideal and it is far from easy to attain.

(Continued on last page)



The Raft of the Medusa



Lesbos Arrival

Sergey Ponomarev, The New York Times



The Flight of the Rohingya

I had never heard of Ravi Zacharias until searching for some references on whether art truly reflects life or vice versa. The search hit on the proposition – which Zacharias attributed to Fyodor Dostoevsky – that "at first art would imitate life, then life would imitate art, and finally, that life would draw the very reason for its existence from art."

Ravi Zacharias, Can Man Live Without God, 1994

(Continued overleaf)

(Episodes and Ourcomes, cont.)

The end of the Dostoevsky quote hinted at some relationship between art and a view of life seen more from a spiritual perspective than a scientific one. At any rate, coincidentally, further digging revealed that Ravi Zacharias is an Indian-born Canadian-American author of numerous Christian books, including *Can Man Live Without God?*, *Light in the Shadow of Jihad* and *The Grand Weaver*.

Initial interest in the topic had been sparked by Geert-Jan's sermon, particularly the paragraph dealing with "the influx of refugees from areas of the world where the simple necessities of life are denied." Recent photographs of refugees fleeing oppression, violence and poverty have figured prominently in the newspapers in recent years, several of which, undeniably, seemed to reflect well-known works of art from Western culture, including the large painting titled *The Raft of the Medusa* by 19th Century French Romantic artist, Théodore Géricault.

As is often the case, while the illustrative similarities in the images shown on *Page 1* add some proof to the thesis, the results of the net search, which led to Zacharias, turned up some additional material of a rather different nature – or, if one reads to the end of the following passage, perhaps not!

"In the 1950s kids lost their innocence.

They were liberated from their parents by well-paying jobs, cars, and lyrics in music that gave rise to a new term – the generation gap.

In the 1960s, kids lost their authority.

It was a decade of protest – church, state, and parents were all called into question and found wanting. Their authority was rejected, yet nothing ever replaced it.

In the 1970s, kids lost their love.

It was the decade of me-ism dominated by hyphenated words beginning with self. Self-image, Self-esteem, Self-assertion.... It made for a lonely world. Kids learned everything there was to know about sex and forgot everything there was to know about love, and no one had the nerve to tell them there was a difference.

In the 1980s, kids lost their hope.

Stripped of innocence, authority and love and plagued by the horror of a nuclear nightmare, large and growing numbers of this generation stopped believing in the future.

In the 1990s kids lost their power to reason.

Less and less were they taught the very basics of language, truth, and logic and they grew up with the irrationality of a post-modern world.

In the new millennium, kids woke up and found out that somewhere in the midst of all this change, they had lost their imagination. Violence and perversion entertained them till none could talk of killing innocents since none was innocent anymore."

From Recapture the Wonder, Ravi Zacharias

Having just celebrated Remembrance Day, the significance of the final preceding paragraph resonated. As Rev. Eason describes in his *Vicar's Vignette* (opposite), we have moved beyond the period where most young people have the memory of major conflict, experiencing, more often than not, the notion that the violence of war and its outcomes are just as likely to strike in the financial district of New York, the streets of London or Manchester, or, we fear, closer to home. This is probably why we find it difficult to reconcile the lives of these strangers with our own. How "do we deal with the influx of refugees" if we only care about ourselves? We have to ask how much this reflects the priorities which we have cherished, increasingly, in our "lonely" society over the past half century.

We do not need to agree with the bleak views outlined by Ravi Zacharias, although I suspect that many will want to do so. The antisocial events which seem to punctuate our lives with increasing frequency make it difficult to argue otherwise. As recently witnessed in a tiny church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, disfunctional young men (the perpetrators of these acts are usually male!) find the need to assassinate, indiscriminately, young and old alike.

Is this phenomenon due to a loss of imagination, as Zacharias suggests? Or has "violence and perversion" truly become a form of "entertainment" as in the many video games available? For some, at which point does virtual killing become indistinguishable from the real thing?

"By embodying killers in VR, we risk making violence more tantalizing, training ourselves in cruelty and normalizing aggression. The problem of what entertainment does to us isn't new. The morality of art has been a matter of debate since Plato. Now, for the first time, technology promises to explode the boundary between the world we create through artifice and performance, and the real world as we perceive it, flickering on the wall of Plato's cave. And the consequences of such immersive participation are complex, uncertain and fraught with risk."

Angela Buckingham, November 2016, aeon.co,

DLP, Editor

Pablo Picasso, Guernica



"When you bow deeply to the universe, it bows back; when you call out the name of God, it echoes inside you."

Morihei Ueshiba, The Art of Peace

Vicar's Vignette

Peace Not As the World Gives

Like myself, many of us have not been touched by war. We view and hear about war and military conflict from a distance; often through television, on the Internet or in the newspaper. And as is noted on the Department of Veteran's Affairs website, the reality for people like myself is that, "For those of us born during peacetime, all wars seem far removed from our daily lives."

And as does so often happen, in times of peace, prosperity, security and freedom we begin to "take for granted our Canadian values and institutions, our freedom to participate in cultural and political events, and our right to live under a government of our choice."

However Remembrance Day is a reminder and an acknowledgment that the present freedoms and blessings we enjoy are in large part due to the courage and sacrifice of those who served their country. Men and women who "...died for us, for their homes and families and friends, for a collection of traditions they cherished and a future they believed in..."

But lest we forget, the cause of war is not far from us; it is near at hand, here at home, lurking within our very being.

The New Testament author of the letter of James puts it well in the 4th chapter, when he states:

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

There is no doubt that humankind has accomplished so much for the betterment of the human condition. We live in and under those many blessings. Yet at the same time there lurks within us this unseen power it seems that is so often able to turn our hearts and intentions from that which is good and selfless to that which is armful and selfish. And that disposition, that turning it seems can happen at times at the flip of a switch. That I believe is why the battle we need to constantly be aware of and willing to fight with all our might is the battle within. It is that inner or spiritual battle as James postulates, which erupts into conflicts and wars in the physical realm. The Veterans Affairs website goes on to say, "The Canadians who went off to war in distant lands,truly believed that 'Without freedom there can be no ensuring peace and without peace no enduring freedom.'

The peace being referred to here, is a peace which allows for and promotes freedom, it is a peace I believe, that comes from God alone, a peace that can be realized at least in part, when one's heart is turned toward the love of God and neighbour.



Jesus reminds us that the peace he brings to a person's heart is not the peace that the world gives; it is his peace, *a peace that passes all understanding*. It is a peace that comes when we fix our hearts and minds on the knowledge and love of God and on his Son Jesus Christ.

It is in seeking that peace that our hearts desires and our motives begin to change. No longer are we asking for things in order to spend on our own pleasures, as James writes, but longing for things for God's purposes, for our neighbours benefit and for our own good.

Hopefully a sense of that peace in our time will translate into actions that will make a significant difference for the future, just as did our ancestor's past actions in wartime made a significant difference for our present.

Yours in Christ, Lorne+



A New Organist & Choirmaster

We are happy to welcome Olivier Lavoie-Gagné to Saint John the Baptist Church as our new organist and choirmaster. Olivier also works as a pianist and accompanist. He holds a Bachelor and a Master of Music in organ performance from the Montreal Conservatory of Music. Many members of

the congregation will have heard him play when he 'filled in' on two recent Sundays, replacing Barbara. Until recently he was the organist and choir director at Briarwood Presbyterian church in Beaconsfield and is the occasional rehearsal pianist for the Lakeshore Light Opera.

Mr. Lavoie-Gagné has performed concerts and recitals in numerous churches throughout the provinces of Québec, Ontario and Prince Edward Island, including Notre-Dame-de-Québec Cathedral, Chalmers-Wesley United Church, Notre-Dame-du-Cap Basilica, St-Antoine-de-Padou Cathedral, St. James United Church and St. Dustan Basilica in Charlottetown, P.E.I. Olivier has also been invited to perform as part of the concert series organized by Les Amis de l'orgue in Drummondville, Rimouski, Québec and Montreal. As an accompanist, Olivier has worked with several choirs including Choeur Opus Novum, L'Ensemble vocal Dal Segno, Les Petits Chanteurs de Québec and the Mountainside Master Chorale of Los Angeles during their Canadian tour in 2013.

Speaking as a member of the choir, it is to be hoped that Olivier's engagement, so soon after the departure of Barbara, will encourage several additional singers to join the choir in order to sustain its viability as an active participant in worship week by week. With the Christmas season so close at hand, by the time you read this, Olivier will have already held a couple of choir rehearsals with returning members and, perhaps, a number of recruits. I trust that we will all welcome Olivier as our regular organist with the same enthusiasm voiced after his participation during recent Sundays.



INTO THE WOODS



To paraphrase Stephen Sondheim:

INTO THE WOODS, it's time to go, we hate the leaves, THEY HAVE TO GO!

Shortcuts To Happiness The Philosophy of Dillerism

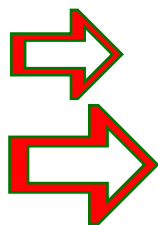
A bachelor is a guy who never made the same mistake once.

The best way to get rid of kitchen odors is to eat out.

Most children threaten at times to run away from home. This is the only thing that keeps some parents going.

We spend the first twelve months of our children's lives teaching them to walk and talk and the next twelve years telling them to sit down and shut up.

Housework probably can't kill you, but why take a chance?



There is still time – sing in the choir for Christmas!!

(Owing and Giving, cont.)

How do we, Canadians, members of the developing western world, deal with the influx of refugees from areas of the world where the simple necessities of life are denied? Are we receiving them with unconditional love? God clearly demands a lot from us. However, let us not forget that this *demanding* God became human, suffered and died on the cross.

“Give to God, the things that are God’s.” So, what do we owe God? God gave us the universe. That was an act of creativity. We, being made in God’s image share in this creativity. We are co-creators of the process of evolution – and that gives us also a responsibility, a responsibility towards the society we create. It is a responsibility determining how we act towards each other, and it is also, today, more and more a responsibility towards the environment God has created.

“All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee.”

From a sermon by Geert-Jan Boudewijnse, Student Assistant, St. J. the B., October 2017

In Appreciation



A big thank you to Eric Winn who rebound our church missal, which had begun to fall apart in the last few months. Knowing that Eric had an avid interest in book binding I asked him if he would be willing to restore the missal. It is now as good as new. Eric would not accept payment for his work preferring that we make a donation to Suitcases for Africa, a cause that is close to his heart. The donation was made from Altar Guild funds with our sincere thanks to Eric.

If anyone has a book in need of repair you can find Eric in the basement of St. George’s Anglican Church, Ste. Anne de Bellevue on Saturdays. That is where I found him when I took my family bible to see if he could restore it and where I took Eric’s photo.

Valerie Delacretaz