

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Nov 26th 2014

You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives. (Luke 21:17-19)

Heaven is going to be incredible. I adore the thought of singing alongside the saints and angels in perpetual adoration of our Lord. Through his divinely inspired Word, God offers us a beautiful glimpse into the reward that awaits those who choose to live a life in his loving service. Meditating on Heaven helps me put things into perspective.

The simple things that irk me in my daily life seem so much more obsolete. Who cares if the ER is calling me to admit yet another patient who doesn't need to be in the hospital? So what if I don't get that scholarly article published? Are my thousands of dollars of debt really worth my time to fret about?

I see many parallels between my vocation in medicine and my pursuit of Heaven. Medical school and residency are, by nature, challenging and overall unrewarding. The sacrifices necessary for success in medicine are numerous and span from postponing financial stability until one's mid-thirties, to chronic sleepiness, to missing family weddings. I can better tolerate, and even possibly welcome, each sacrifice when I adequately put it into the perspective of a gift of myself for my future patients and, extrapolating further, for my future wife and family.

In a similar way, our lifelong journey toward Heaven has its joys, but many parts of our faithfulness to God's will in our lives are sacrificial. We sacrifice our lust in choosing to be chaste. We sacrifice our greed by tithing. We sacrifice our pride by avoiding the desire to gossip. We sacrifice our popularity by standing up against our culture's support of same-sex marriage, abortion, and contraception. Each of these examples is truly challenging. They hurt. But as they purify us for the delayed-gratification of Heaven, they can grow to be sources of great joy even on that journey.

There are joys that come from the sacrifices of our vocations. The satisfaction derived from truly benefiting a patient's life is astonishing. There is genuine beauty and purpose in saving our individual sexualities for our respective brides (whether they be a spouse or the Church). Donating money to worthy causes or building another up with words of affirmation feels superb. It is in recognizing these delights that come from dying to ourselves that sheds light on St. Francis' Peace Prayer: "it is in dying that we are born to eternal life." Each of the delights that come from truly following Jesus all pale in comparison to the ultimate joy awaiting the faithful in our Heavenly Home.

Getting into Heaven is not as simple as our relativistic society would like us to believe. Jesus himself acknowledges this challenge in today's Gospel. And yet, the sacrifices are worth it. "Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven," (Matthew 5:11-12).

Frankly, nothing matters more than becoming a saint. The sacrifice is worth it.

Let's all find a way to make a sacrifice of ourselves in order to "win the victory over the beast" and be invited into the Heavenly chorus where we will together sing:

"Great and wonderful are your works, Lord God almighty. Just and true are your ways, O king of the nations. Who will not fear you, Lord, or glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All the nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed," (Rev. 15:3-4).

Sam Pierre - Creighton's School of Medicine