

Thoughts on participating in goodness

From the Blog of Mchael Haldas

“A brother asked one of the elders: What good thing shall I do, and have life thereby? The old man replied: God alone knows what is good. However, I have heard it said that someone inquired of Father Abbott Nesteros the great, the friend of Abbott Anthony, asking: What good work shall I do? and that he replied: Not all works are alike. For Scripture says that Abraham was hospitable and God was with him. Elias loved solitary prayer, and God was with him. And David was humble, and God was with him. Therefore, whatever you see your soul to desire according to God, do that thing, and you shall keep your heart safe.” (Thomas Merton)

“The goodness that is the gift of God, the truth of our existence, is acquired moment-by-moment. I frequently encourage people to “do the next good thing.” We cannot grasp the good as an extended long-range plan. Such things are themselves little more than imaginings. When we study the commandments of Christ, they are quite concrete and specific, admonitions for each “next thing” that confronts us. When the Rich Young Man came to Christ (Matt. 19:16-22), he asked “What good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?” Christ directs him to God, who alone is good. When pressed further, Christ directs him to the commandments. When the young man presses yet more, he hears the ultimate good thing: “Sell what you have. Give it to the poor. And come and follow me.” This example confronts us in each moment of our lives. There is ever the possibility to “sell what we have” – to give away the false structures and inauthentic identities that we cling to (including their material support) and to “give to the poor” – to love the other (neighbor, enemy) who stands before us. “My brother is my life” is the renunciation of every false form of wealth and the acquisition of true existence – life in Christ. The treasure of the Kingdom of God is buried in the life of my brother, my sister.” (Father Stephen Freeman)

“...we might ask whether we are living in the Name of Christ. Paul wrote, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (OSB Colossians 3:17). To conduct ourselves in the Name of Christ means that we speak and act with the divine power and authority of Christ as His disciples and servants. We consciously live as the instruments of the Lord’s peace, goodness, and love.” (Fr. Basil)

“...all of us are called to be witnesses to Christ and our salvation. People will come to a knowledge of Christ and to faith through us, and what they observe in our daily lives. That is why it is so important for each of us to be united to Christ so that we can bear the fruit that others can see and thus come to faith in Christ themselves...Christ relies on us to be His witnesses in order to bring other people to faith in Him. They will know the goodness, love and mercy of the Lord through us and how we behave – a daunting thought for us to be sure.” (Fr. Ted Bobosh)

“Goodness can be spoken about -- indeed, it is the only thing we should speak about. It also comes into being -- it is in fact the only thing that should come into being; for although by nature it is uncreated, yet because of God's love for us it allows itself to come into being through us by grace...God works through all kinds of people and in all kinds of situations to bring good into the world. Goodness even shines in times of sadness and tragedy. Every good gesture that comes in a bad situation is from God. Even every good gesture that comes through a bad person is from God.” (St. Maximos the Confessor, Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis)