

Grace Notes in Miniature,

Wednesday June 10th, 2020

As I read through the prayers for the day in my missalette this morning, I was struck first by the Collect or opening prayer:

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.



A whole bunch of stuff occurs to me as I read and pray these words. First of all, the basic message of the joy that comes from serving God – which certainly applies to us as we fulfill our vocation in Catholic education. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=igomtlc1_yc The next thing that struck me was the “wordiness” of the prayer – three lines but one sentence. In my Theology courses where often we used work translated from German or Latin, we would comment on sentences which went on forever – in the case of one



German author, almost to a whole page in English on occasion. Then there is the actual choice of words, some of which we may only use in the context of our prayer life: “gladness”, “constancy”, “the author of all that is good”. We tend to speak to God in very formal terms and to feel uncomfortable when we are asked to extemporise with a prayer as we feel that the words should be more eloquent than our normal speech. Yet, the best lesson I

learned about prayer was hearing my four-year-old son say, with great reverence: “Thank you, God, for my peanut butter sandwich.”! From the mouths of babes...(Psalm 8:2, Matt 21:16) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lfkiyrNrtQ> Then there is the description of God as the “author of all that is good”. The word, author, can be defined as “the person who originated or gave existence to anything” and whose authorship determines responsibility for what was created.” (Wikipedia) and is a usage that we wouldn’t customarily consider. That then conjured a vision of God (the stately, white-bearded God of my childhood) writing us into existence and the deliberateness of each letter being formed. That leads me back to **Psalm 139:14**: I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. And God still is writing... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNxPcvE54CU>

The word 'constancy' isn't one which we use very often, although we would certainly be familiar with the adjective associated with this noun. Much more, though, than just consistent, persistent, this word implies fidelity, trustworthiness, devotion, and is a good word to apply to one who recognises what they do as vocation. Our role in Catholic education is much more than just a career or a job; along with responsibility for educating, we are called to witness faith, to lead our students to encounter the Lord, to be fellow pilgrims with them. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yHJMPw8RHU> (or, if you prefer more stately) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YraYRIkj6Y&list=RD5yHJMPw8RHU&index=2>

Then there is the concluding doxology, or words of glory, addressed to the Holy Trinity. I am still ruminating on the breaking open of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity this past Sunday and therefore more attentive than usual to this expression of our praise to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who personify pure love: love, being loved, and sharing love.



This is the model on which our relationships are built in our schools and classrooms no less than anywhere else in our family of faith. English is such a confusing language, with love having so many meanings, that it may make us more comfortable to talk in terms of Agape. This is the word commonly used to refer to the love originating from God or Christ for humankind, and modelling the love that we in turn are called to share with each other. Tertullian, a Roman author of the late 2nd and early 3rd

century wrote "See how these Christians love one another." as he witnessed Christians dying for their faith and for each other. St Paul also had a lot to say about love, such as, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28) We may no longer have to anticipate facing lions in the arena; however, the challenges of our forum can often be very daunting. We have to be able to stand up and be counted when our students challenge us with their experience in the marketplace, with defences against prevalent attitudes that "nice guys finish last" and that being aggressive is the way to succeed.

I leave you today with my favourite anthem arrangements of the 23rd Psalm: watchers of the Vicar of Dibley may recognise this. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QBN3HBA9iY>

With every blessing, Gillian