

OUR SPIRITUAL LADDER TO HEAVEN LIES WITHIN US!

by

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And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

[St. Luke 17:20-21]

Many many years ago, I was brought up by my 19th century-type grandmother, who didn't know anything *then*. Who in authority does to a kid? Although I often disregarded her advice and teaching, now it appears most amazing to me each year how perceptive and spiritually accurate these were. Oh, if one could only relive the past.

She taught me that it was what you were *inside* that was the most important thing in life. It wasn't the clothes you wore. In those days, our clothes were chosen for durability and utility, not flash and "keeping up with the Joneses". Nor was it the car you drove. As was the case in those days, I walked a few miles to and from high school daily. Why? Because I had no car. What was in your heart was the most important aspect of you, Grandma advised. Be *humble* and "turn the other cheek" to any persecutors. Stand on your own two feet and don't follow the crowd, which might lead you astray. Ask yourself "What would Jesus do?" *before* doing it!

Now, as a teenager, most of the time I ignored her Scripturally –based advice because as a kid I thought I knew everything. How wrong I was!

Grandma emphasised personal hygiene, as all persecutors of young boys do (smile), but stressed the important point that you had to be clean *inside* – what you were interiorly (inwardly in the heart) was what really mattered. Hard work, preferably physical – we knew no other, (after all, what other work were we qualified to do?) was good for the soul and our development into manhood. These words might be fighting ones today since it is well known that only illegal immigrants do physical labour, the rest of our teen crowd are professional athletes in grooming and do not do manual labour. In addition, they always get what they want and even more and do not understand the word "no," because they have never heard it.

America seems to be a somewhat new strain of Apartheid; yet, it would be aghast to think this was so. They don't think about it since this concentration would take their thoughts off themselves. After all, "they're 'worth it,' baby!

External Superficiality

My relatively few comments about growing up in the 50s can be vividly contrasted with today. Just put on the TV or the computer and treat yourself to the advertising deluge dedicated to the me only crowd. Externality rules! Who cares what kind of person you are inwardly? After all, it's what you look like, how you appear *to others* that counts. What kinds of clothes do you have and wear, latest trends, makeup, jewelry, expensive diamond watches for the ladies and Rolex for the men, diamond earring for *both*, hot cars to pick up chicks or 'flirt' with "boys"? As a 17 year old high school graduate, did your parents get you a new fire engine red Mustang convertible to "tool around in" while you go to one of our community colleges posing as an educational institution?

Does your house have five bedrooms, three full baths, a kitchen the size of those represented on TV chef shows or household advertisements? All these ads feature kitchens with more square footage than three rooms in my wife's and my apartment/flat.

Do you have the humility of a reality show contestant? When the reality show judge asks you if you're the best and are you worth the \$1,000,000 prize being given to the winner, do you bellow out confidently "Certainly, I do, after all, I have wanted this all my life" (this from a mere 17 year old...)? If you say or indicate "No," or "maybe," or, perish the thought, "God willing," you're outthere!

Have you heard any cell phone conversations of the depth of shallowness as I heard recently at a McDonalds of all places? An animated young man of perhaps 18 was engaged in a cell phone talk in which he continually paced back and forth before the several service help assembled to take your orders, holding the phone jammed against his ear and giving off vibes of his personal importance for all to see and feel. He was explaining to the "other end" how important he will be naturally to any potential employer due to his vast abilities, although he never specified them or how he would have achieved the ability to do them at his tender age. He continued on, mentioning the figure of \$200,000 yearly, but he doesn't want to just sit at a desk! Is this nauseating or not!

Certainly, millions of young people are not like this, but enough are to sound an alarm. Where do they get these absurd ideas? From you? Think about it...

Brethren,

What kind of world are we in? One to avoid through Christ. We are not spiritually fighting for life in this world; rather, for life in the eternal one of our Saviour Jesus Christ. The spiritual ladder to the Kingdom of Heaven lies within us:

Enter eagerly into the treasure-house that lies within you, and so you
will see the treasure-house of heaven: for the two are the same, and

there is but one single entry to them both. The ladder that leads to the Kingdom is hidden within you, and is found in your own soul. Dive into *yourself* (emphasis supplied) and in your soul you will discover the rungs by which to ascend.

[St. Isaac the Syrian]

When you take God into your heart, He will accept you and come to dwell in you:

When you establish yourself in the inner man by the remembrance of God, then Christ the Lord will enter and dwell within you,. The two things go together.

[St. Theophan the Recluse]

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The union of the mind with the heart is a union of the spiritual thoughts of the mind with the spiritual feelings of the heart.

[St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)]

Reject this world of avarice and narcissism. Raise the banner of humility, which is absolutely essential for Christ's world, which is *not* of this one!

Humility is that single altar on which it is allowed us by spiritual law to offer the sacrifice of prayer and on which the offered sacrifice of prayer ascends to God and appears before His face. Humility is that *single vessel* (emphasis supplied) into which the gifts of grace are put by the finger of God.

[St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov) (tr. by Father Lazarus), ON THE PRAYER OF JESUS, Ibis Press, Berwick, Maine, 2006, p. 104.]

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.