

Alleluia

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Be an Alternate Society

God's Will as the Path to Peace

By Christina Roupp



For Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee.

These words, penned by Augustine of Hippo, summarize the purpose of our earthly existence - the created seeks to know the Creator.

I could give the theological background for the importance of this pursuit or provide a list of ways to do

so; however, I am neither qualified nor led by the Spirit to do so. Instead, I will share with you my own journey in seeking to be docile to the Holy Spirit and allow Jesus to have Lordship in my life, in the hope that you may glean something of merit to apply to your own life.

In my teenage years, I was overwhelmed with the concept of God's will. It seemed larger than life and something I could not discern on my own, while at the same time something I could not mess up.

At the conclusion of my senior year of high school, I found myself fatigued and burned out. All my friends were going to college and I assumed that I would too. My parents perceived better than I my limitations and the need for a time

of respite. They encouraged me to consider taking some time off from school. While the idea appealed to me on one hand, it terrified me on the other. Deviate from the expected norm? What would people think? What about my scholarship and grant money?

After some time away, much prayer and counsel, I was peacefully able to decide to postpone college. During the following school year, I felt a bit separated from my friends because I wasn't doing what they were doing, but they accepted my decision and we worked to maintain relationships. Through the year, the Lord showed me the prudence and grace of making this decision, and I felt His peace and blessing in doing so. I enrolled in college the following school year, even receiving all the financial aid I had originally been awarded.

Two years later, when I showed up for classes to begin my third year at ASU, I discovered that I had mysteriously been dropped from every

Alleluia Celebrates the 4th



(See related story on page 4)

(Continued on page 2 - GOD'S PEACE)

God's Peace an Alternate to Worldly Pride

(Continued from page 1 - GOD'S PEACE)

single one. The Registrar's office could offer no explanation or solution, and even begging professors to let me in to the classes proved futile. Completely stumped, I drove to the chapel and sought the Lord's guidance.

When I questioned Him about this crazy mishap, He spoke very clearly to me, saying, "I called you to go to college for a season. That season has ended." As bizarre as it sounded, the peace in my spirit testified to the truth of the words. I tested this decision with my parents and my Older Woman, and after prayer and counsel, I made another big decision. Once again, I felt the Lord show me the prudence of this decision, confirming to me that this was His will for me.

Around this time, Jeff and I embarked on a whirlwind courtship, which I was totally unprepared for, and soon after, marriage. God's hand was upon us though, and He knew how much healing and growth He would accomplish in us through each other.

Through these experiences, I learned to trust Jesus with the big stuff. My real hang-ups seemed to be in the small stuff. I tended to get mired down in detail, focusing on the struggles and disappointments in my life. In doing so, I lost a lot of peace and, honestly, a lot of myself. To compensate, I set up many idols, stubbornly clinging to false sources of security to dull the pain I felt.

We can all become dissatisfied, disillusioned and disappointed with life. In response, we may become like the prodigal son, demanding more than we have been given. In our discontent, we exercise free will and set out on our own path, convinced that we will make our own way in the world. However, as Thomas Watson,

seventeenth century British preacher, wrote, "Discontent is a fretting humor, which dries the brains, wastes the spirits, corrodes and eats out the comfort of life."

In my discontent, I was afraid to look inside myself, to the root and cause of my pain. I sought to insulate myself against it, but only became very lonely and mired in self-pity. If I could blame someone else for my struggles or someone would befriend me and save me, then everything would get better. I, like the prodigal son, sunk pretty low with this attitude.

At a prayer meeting one night, I went to Mrs. Conkright for prayers, confessing my emptiness. She prayed with me and the next morning I began to have a steady prayer time. I told God that I was empty, that I didn't feel Him, and that I needed Him to show up in my life. I figured that if I pestered Him enough, He would have to listen to me.

Some time later, Sue Stenger shared with our Support Group about something called Theophostic prayer ministry. I began receiving this beautiful, healing prayer.

As I began to look inward and be honest with myself and my Lord, I became alive again. Deep wounds of the past, sin patterns, and lies were healed and redeemed. My relationships grew and improved. The life that had been sucked out of me before was being poured in afresh.

Jesus continues to minister to me and teach me. Within the past five years, I was permitted to walk through a very dark and lonely valley. Upon first embarking on this path, I tried very hard to solve the associated problems and fix what I could. After many failed attempts, I became acutely aware of my own pow-

erlessness. Only after I accepted this situation as God's will for my life, and surrendered both the valley and the outcome to Him, did I find peace.

The depths of my faith and trust continued to be tested, but I clung to Jesus, believing that He would see me through. Through this experience, I learned that if we will allow Him, Jesus will use our pain and struggles to draw us closer to Himself. In the words of Frederick William Faber, English theologian, "We must wait for God. Long, meekly, in the wind and wet, in the thunder and lightening, in the cold and dark. Wait and He will come. He never comes to those who do not wait."

We live in a very modern and independent age, where reliance on another, least of all God, is not a way of life widely respected or espoused. Instead, society and the media urge us to *"take control of your life, look out for yourself, and do what feels right."* While these axioms may sound meritorious at first, upon closer examination we find that they are rooted in the age-old sin of pride. Better put, these translate into *I will take control of my life, I will look out for myself, and I will do what feels right for me.*

This ideology denies the need for a Savior. As my friend Fr. Aaron Pidel, SJ has said though, "We are all in need of a Savior."

If we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, we will never get lost. He is our Good Shepherd. Will we not take Him at His word? Will we not surrender to His love, and there find peace in His will?

I am reminded of something John Michael Talbot said on a praise CD we have: "As soon as we say to the Lord, 'We will do anything for You except...,' we have limited the full working of the Spirit of God in our life."

Why would we limit the full working of God in our lives? Fr. Robert

To Whom Much is Given: Our Life in Perspective



By Nelson Parris

I grew up in Columbia County in the 70s and 80s. I was completely oblivious to the monumental, Holy Spirit-guided efforts of the founders and first members of the Alleluia Community mere miles away. In fact, quite ironically, my only knowledge of South Augusta was that it was the side of town to avoid at all cost. My introduction to Alleluia came in the mid-90s. Even as a young man who was in need of much maturing and spiritual growth, it was quite easy for me to garner the perspective to see the specialness of Alleluia and Faith Village...despite my errant, precon-

ceived notions about the area. Because of this perspective, I quickly discerned that community life deserved my very serious consideration and I joined Alleluia in 1997.

Again, I immediately knew Alleluia was special; I had no idea, however, how *unique* Alleluia was; that understanding has recently changed. In mid-June, I had the privilege to represent the Alleluia Community at a Pastoral Training Institute (PTI) conference hosted by the Sword of the Spirit association of Christian communities. Accompanied by my covenant brother, Tod Densmore, I enjoyed a

long weekend filled with several intellectual and thought-provoking teachings as well as many occasions to converse with members and leaders of numerous communities across the United States and Canada. It was an incredible, eye-opening opportunity to learn from and share with loving, committed people from a myriad of backgrounds.

Over the course of the three days of the conference and dozens of conversations, it became exceedingly evident to me that there are people all over the world who are hungering (starving, really) for community – doing whatever they can to try to build it. And as I became more and more informed of the details and backgrounds of each community represented at the conference, it was equally evident to me that these good, loving folks were building, in a real and specific way, the *very thing* that we in Alleluia *already have!* We are indeed a blessed community.

Primarily, this realization gave me a much clearer glimpse into the sacri-

(Continued on page 4 - IN PERSPECTIVE)

Self-reliance vs Dependence on God

(Continued from page 2 - GOD'S PEACE)

Barron states that "at the root of every sin is fear" and Fr. Emmerich Vogt says that "fear is the chief activator of our faults." If this is true, then it is fear that causes us to put limits on God. It is fear that prevents us from surrendering our lives to the Lordship of Jesus. It is fear that blocks us from receiving love and grace from our merciful Savior.

We forget that "God is love, and... [t]here is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear." (1 John 4:16, 18)

Paul Tournier, Swiss psychiatrist, wrote that "since we are never entirely free, since we always depend upon someone or something, it is certainly by dependence on God that we have the means of knowing the greatest possible freedom."

I can truly attest to the truth of these words. In handing everything over to God and allowing Him to transform me and my life, I have

found freedom and contentment. Jesus is certainly not finished with me yet, and won't be this side of heaven. I still stumble and fall, but I am a happier, more content person, at peace with my Savior and others.

In surrendering to Him, I have come to know the peace that passes understanding. I, like Ralph Waldo Emerson, can say that "all I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen."

What if our dependence on God exceeded our fears, our sinful tendencies, and our worldly pursuits? What if we surrendered ourselves entirely to Jesus, without reservation – every care, every loved one, every hurt, every sin, every struggle, every decision, every area of our lives?

In surrendering to Jesus, we do not give up our identity, but become more who we are created to be. In surrendering to Him, we encounter a Savior and experience a love beyond

comprehension.

"Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

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Our Life

(Continued from page 3 - IN PERSPECTIVE)

fices and tough decisions of the founders and early members of our community. It is profoundly apparent to me that these men and women chose a path that was neither easy nor popular in order to live a way of life that would honor God as well as establish a foundation for future generations to live fruitful Christian lives filled with fraternity and support.

So, all of this begs the question...are we being good stewards of what the Lord has given to us? Do we truly appreciate how blessed our lives are? Are we focused on and intentional about preserving this beautiful way of life for the loved ones who follow us? And do these things become manifest by us telling people about the greatness of our life often...inviting others to come and experience it with us? Henri Nouwan encapsulates the necessity of sharing community nicely:

"When we claim and constantly reclaim the truth of being the chosen ones, we soon discover within ourselves a deep desire to reveal to others their own chosenness. Instead of making us feel that we are better, more precious or valuable than others, our awareness of being chosen opens our eyes to the chosenness of others. That is the great joy of being chosen: the discovery that others are chosen as well."

– Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*

I exhort you, brothers and sisters, to pull the light out from under the basket and reveal to others their "chosen-ness." God blessed us with this

Celebrating the 4th

How better to start the celebration of our country's birthday than to hold a good old fashion, outdoor prayer meeting the night before, under the pecan trees in Center Circle of Faith Village? Once again the Alleluia Community joined together with family and friends to praise and worship our Lord, Jesus Christ, in peace and unity and to pray for our country to return to it's Christian roots. There is much to pray for.

Afterwards, the ice cream social provided a wonderful time of fellowship for kids and adults alike.

July 4th dawned sunny and hot, so the water activities and games from 10 - 2:00 were a welcome relief for the kids. They also enjoyed popcorn, cotton candy and cold drinks.

The grounds were then setup for an outdoor picnic from 6-7 p.m. followed by entertainment until 8. Everyone was encouraged to continue the celebration on Saturday at Mistletoe State Park where boating, skiing, kyacking, paddle boarding and swimming were enjoyed by all.



Alleluia life. And as with all gifts from God, we are commanded to share it.

Praised be Jesus Christ, now and forever.

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