

Political Catholicism vs. Christ's Catholicism

Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés | Mar. 31, 2009 | El Rio Debajo del Rio

Internecine: ways of disagreeing which are destructive to all sides.

In our time, when it too often has come down to our listening hard, but not being able to tell some priests from most politicians -- as they too often sound exactly alike, choosing the same rhetorical references and processes to defeat or demand a cause ... we, in our beliefs, our striving to hold life sacred, have to go a different way.

We cannot agree to hunt down other souls, call them names no matter how clever we imagine ourselves to be. We cannot call them out as unworthy of the bread of Life. We have to try to keep following the Source of the source? purposely ... even when it drops below ground where we cannot easily see it for a time.

We cannot decide how to live based on personal or ecclesiastical pique or from having our sense of power inflated by special interest groups. We cannot agree to harm souls who are here on earth to learn, who are here on earth to learn to return to the Source. We cannot abide they ought be left stranded while they are in the midst of their God-known learnings.

Most of all, though we can say what is not yet right in an otherworldly sense, we cannot condemn any entire person, for we have been told time and again, and in jagged lightning bolts and thunder cracks for humans seem to so easily forget, that judgment of other souls is reserved for One who is not us.

One holy story in particular reminds us where to stand, how not to collapse and surrender the soul's ground, but rather stand strong in the clear-cut guiding principal ...

That guidance is a way of thinking, a basic attitude we go to sleep with and awaken with, a way of life for which much bloodshed was given that we might have Love instead the old ways of blood libel and blood sacrifice when people disagree with one another ...

or when some decide who is sinful? ... without ever being able to purely know that so-called sinner's? troth with God or their learning relationship to the Source ... but deciding anyway, that whomsoever one finds offending, must in some way, be shunned, exiled, done away with.

Listen ...

The Lone Man Stands Against The Priest-Thugs

Imagine priests in dusty black robes, turbans tied high to look like crowns. They are not so unlike others who live in a rocky, dusty desert. Imagine their dirty feet, soiled leggings, their fingernails circled black with grime. Imagine flecks of food still hanging in their beards. Imagine a gang of portly men, the best fed in town, who only have one interest in life: exiling and killing those who

do not conform to their ways. Not to scriptural ways, but to their own man-made tribal ways which they attempt to buoy by quoting ancient scripture.

Now imagine they have dragged a woman screaming from her home. She is bleeding from road rash by being dragged. They have torn her hair and her clothes so she is half naked ... all the more reason for this gang of thugs to be enraged; how dare she show her sinful body like that. Whore, she is nothing but a whore.

They have large rocks to stone her to death. This means they will crash heavy stones down on her face, her breasts, her chest cavity, her genitals, until she bleeds to death internally or dies from a crushed skull. Her kidneys will be torn. Her liver lacerated, her spleen bleeding, the periosteum, that dense layer of vascular connective tissue enveloping the bones, will be utterly destroyed by the blows.

They will not cease breaking her bones, breaking open her skull until they see gray matter flying. Skulls when broken make a loud popping noise, similar to a ball being hit with a bat. The thugs will not stop until they hear that sound, until they know this one deemed a sinner by the testimony of men, can never recover, until she is dispatched from this world by the abject violence of the thugs' hands.

But then imagine a man, a simple man, all by himself, in the midst of his teaching in the temple. Imagine him being bellowed at by the thugs ...

?Hey you. Teacher! What do you have to say for yourself you fool who preaches love everywhere? The rules say we kill her. Are you going to tell us to go against the rules??

The lone man who has already seen these thugs unleash their murders on other women and men on other days, offers silence to their howling demands that he answer.

The thugs are insulted. They pull back for a moment, enraged any man would dare to think their question not worthy of an immediate yes, that exiling, starving, and murdering another human being ... is just fine.

But the lone man stands his ground. Instead of excoriating the thugs, the man lifts his finger.

The thugs laugh! ?Ah ha ha ha! Look he thinks he will chastise us with his finger.?

But, the man does not use his hand as a weapon, nor to point in accusation. Instead he bends over the earth, his robes dragging on the ground ... and there he begins to draw in the soft dirt.

The thugs hop and hoot and harass the man, scorning him for being a weakling. They are angry because he will not agree with them, refuses to answer their trumped up ?litmus test.? ?Well,? taunt the thugs, ?didn?t Moses in the Law handed down from Yahweh, command us that a whore should be stoned til her guts are smashed, til she bleeds to death??

Quietly, but with fire in his eyes, the lone man draws himself up to his fullest height, and says, ?If you are without sin yourself, go ahead, smash the first stone down to break her bones.?

The thugs are enraged by his answer all the more. How dare this inferior man question their time-honored hunting of human beings they deem doing wrong? How dare this nothing of a man question their tribal murderings. How dare anyone interrupt their right as men handed down from

other men, and handed down from the men before them? How dare anyone interfere with their righteous rage, their carrying out their duties as men, their clear-cut tribal exhortation to murder, exile, harm whomsoever violates tribal rules ... made by men?!

But the lone man was not afraid. In what has long been known as a gesture of courage: He literally turns his back to the thugs, showing them he did not even fear they would jump him from behind.

Instead, yet again the lone man bent over the earth and wrote with his finger in the dust.

Suddenly, the oldest of the thugs picked up the hems of his robes and hastily left the temple, soon followed by the younger priests, til all those who believed in ritually prescribed harm to living human beings had hurriedly retreated.

Left in the circle of the temple with dust filtering down through the dim light, were the lone man and the poor ragged woman. Too, they were surrounded by souls with their hearts in their throats ... from having witnessed not only a horribly tense stand-off with the very thugs they had long feared, but also from seeing and hearing this heroic and deep teaching ... and beholding this teacher ... this teacher who did not rise to fight, nor to flee, nor to flay, to do no harm, even to thugs.

But rather this rebbe, this teacher stood in His own desert radiance in order to teach, most especially to tend to the souls, hearts, and spirits of others. Without war. Without exiling. Without trumpeting that it was his duty. Without starving out. Without breaking bones. Without calling on others to do spiritual or physical harm to living human beings who are finding their ways in this world, and in the other world as well.

The lone man looks into the hurt woman's eyes and asks, 'Can you be condemned by mere men, really? Have they truly power to condemn you?'

The woman, trying to cover her body, realizes, No, thugs do not have Godly power to condemn her other than in their unexamined tribal ways.

The lone man says to her then, 'I inflict no loss of life or loss of soul on you. I do not condemn you. Go back to your homeplace in peace. Your future work is not to lose sight of G-d.'

In his own gentle way, the lone man teaches her what he has just taught the thugs, but in a different way: do not be subsumed by affairs of culture or human appetites, do not be separate from the Source, rather be guided by It.

Then lone man turns to the group of souls who are his students, summarizing why this confrontation did not come to warring, but rather to protection of those called out as unworthy. He teaches in that moment, in two sentences about the One who really knows what's what, a gift not given to human beings.

Thus, the Lone man says: I am the Light of the World: those who follow me shall never be in the dark.

Lone man taught a third way. Not for this side, not for that side. But for Love. For Mercy. Somehow, someway, finding a way through that does not harm, but is a true teaching of holiness ... and most of all not by railing or condemning, but by living this: Living mercy. Living kindness. Living forgiveness. Living Love.

The Third Way Through: the Soul's Way

In later passages, the old priests continue to abrade Christ's pronouncements, taking them literally, instead of understanding Christ is using story and symbolism to teach deeper truths, ones that cannot be said in prose alone, that can never be stated in political rhetoric, but always goes back to the language of mercy and love.

No easy thing, learning those two. There have been days for all of us when we wanted to beg God to please let so and so just wither on the stick and never walk the earth again. But, especially in religious in-fighting, we've been given the third way through, the worthy bar to strive toward daily.

Each of us will decide and find his or her own way through internecine fighting. I'd just humbly suggest that the bar be set at more than 75% demonstrable mercy and love each day rather than black condemnation and grandstanding and all the other pitiful actions the worldly ego seems to think of first in its attempts to influence the secular world to its way of thinking.

Christ's lesson is in part: human mind forgets its true origin daily, gets heated up about the worldly, takes up worldly ideas and makes them the most important over the soul's knowing, forgets the only bloodline is not made of rules made by men, but those given by the Source.

An Unanswered Question: What Was the Lone Man Writing in the Dirt?

The story of the lone teacher in the temple accosted by thugs and the poor woman they'd hauled out in public and accused of adultery does not end where it ends ...

In certain translations, the thug-priests are said to have become "conscience pricked." It was decades before I learned the lost part of this scriptural story (Book of John 8:1-12).

When it finally came, it arrived from Monsignor Jones, a scholarly, religious priest whom we were honored to have Mass with/by every Sunday for a long time. After Mass, Monsignor would gather us around and teach us a continuation of the Gospel that day, inviting us to ask questions, in what I now realize was the manner of the ancient rabbis. One Sunday, the story of the woman to be stoned was the topic.

"But Father," we asked, "what made the thugs seem to at least vaguely yet suddenly remember they had souls, that they had separated from God via their strong, but misled desires to "purify" their tribal religious group?"

Father asked us if we remembered that the Master was writing on the ground? What do you think he was writing?

We didn't know. It certainly didn't seem like it would be doodling, or just trying to gain time to think. That'd be too human only.

Monsignor said, yes, it was something mysterious to humans, something of the Divine.

The priests ran away not because they suddenly became wise men, but because Jesus was writing on the ground a kind of diary, listing the exact sins of each priest during that priest's lifetime including that very day.

Christ knew their minds and hearts. He knew their sins, the time of day, the place, the parties concerned, specifically ... down to tiniest details. What he was writing in the dust? A complete account of all the priests' failures to be faithful to God rather than being so intent on deploying the ideas of men in the worldly world.

Father Jones went on to say that the oldest priests ran away first because they had sinned most ... that they'd had more years to sin, of course. He laughed, not in meanness, but in simple recognition of all our frailties here on

earth. That's true, isn't it? Aren't there days when though we know we didn't invent sin, the older we become, we worry we might have somehow invented a few new sins along the way?

When the priests saw Christ knew their sins exactly, they were filled with fear he would expose them publicly. Although diving for cover is what innocent people do too-- often, sunshine on a thug's hidden motives and secret meetings, tends to make them dive for cover for an entirely different reason.

So, they literally ran away. Not because they were chastened exactly, but because they did not want others to realize they were hypocrites, putting out false tests for purity, punishing others while being "sinners of substance" themselves. Their ways of conducting themselves under the guise of religiosity, was considered an ultimate abomination toward God who forgives all. At the drop of a hat. At any moment of heartfelt contrition ... a contrition that cannot be mind-read by mere human beings.

When in our times we cannot always tell the difference any longer between some priests and most politicians, we have to find our ways back to this temple, this exact place where the lone man is still teaching this specific teaching.

It is not easy. It is hard not to want to exile the exilers. It is hard not to want to uncaringly punish the punishers. But, Christ did not punish. By how he lived, how he taught, he made a clear bright line about the third way, a way that follows rules given so simply, so straightforwardly by the Source.

Push back against whatsoever pushes to cripple and redefine Christ's teaching about what is holy and humble. Speak out about what must return to the care of the soul instead of being taken over by the blind judgments of the ego. Notice in your own best soulful way. Stand up against excesses that degrade the spirits of self and others.

In all these and more, we strive to do two difficult things: to moderate these matters within ourselves, as well as to mediate these in matters outside ourselves. In the main, to stand in the temple with the lone teacher.

To love, to be Catholic does not mean to be a patsy, a do-nothing, say-nothing, political party-line follower. Neither does it mean to become a screamer and bellower like the thugs. I have to smile a bit as some current priests who are younger -- or have not been paying attention -- have recently exhorted others to stand up and proclaim their Catholicism publicly, when we old believers have been doing exactly that -- and often without any armor whatsoever -- and no publicity -- for more than eighty years.

But it is clear, to follow the lone teacher does not mean to try to kill or cut off other souls. It means to be a follower of Christ. Not a follower of Peter, Paul, Fred or Max. Instead: Ichthys ... in ancient times, as now, still the secret sign of a Christian when living in a secular over culture. Ichthys: The pre-eminent Mind Reader.

It is not easy to stand and withstand the day and all it can bring sometimes, but I speak directly into your sacred heart ... it is superlatively easy to know where to stand:

Whereas the history of hunting down who is imagined as pure and who is imagined as impure ... tends to reveal over and over that a politicized religion will sink ever more into a secular cesspool with little effect other than further dichotomizing souls ... there is that third place to stand. Let us take that stand ... in that place.

And, let us pray:

No matter what we have to say, no matter how clear, incisive, revealing, assertive, charging, loving, supportive or observing ... let us bend to work at trying to stand in the temple with the lone Teacher protecting the ragged woman ... and to say our piece from there ...

for very soon, a different set of thugs will come for our lone Teacher and kill Him. We have to ready ourselves to be the first in the garden to see Him again, to insist on His presence, even to ones like literal Thomas, who faltered there for a minute til he could see it All for himself. Even one as close as Thomas, was still learning, as are we all.

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