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A poor handful of earthly toys in exchange for God

Carol Meyer | Jan. 26, 2011 Eco Catholic

?Master,? said the student, ?you have renounced riches and comforts to seek God and teach us wisdom. ?You are reversing the case!? said the saint with a mild rebuke. ?I have left a few paltry dollars and a few petty pleasures for a cosmic empire of endless bliss. How then have I denied myself anything? The shortsighted worldly people are the real renunciants. They give up an unparalleled divine possession for a poor handful of earthly toys.?

This account from *Autobiography of a Yogi* jolts us with its truth. We Catholics espouse but seldom live our belief that God alone truly satisfies our souls and gives us joy. We tend to pursue the life of possessions as avidly as the next guy, in spite of the fact that Jesus modeled and constantly preached an alternate course. He admonished us to gather the riches of heaven, stop building bigger barns, give what we have to the poor, stop serving money, and to seek first the kingdom of heaven.

Let?s be radical and just assume for a moment that Jesus was right. If we can block out the loud cacophony of the Madison Avenue minions urging us to buy, buy, buy, the words of Jesus might have a chance to take hold in our lives. If we let go of the fears that emerge as we contemplate having less, maybe excitement about the spiritual blessings it holds can motivate us to start down the road less traveled.

I visited Nicaragua in 1986, and was captivated by the people sporting broad smiles amidst what we call poverty. I couldn?t understand their Spanish, but fell in love with them. I attended a riveting base community gathering and liturgies that put ours to shame. Their spiritual riches all but shouted from the rooftops. I will never forget the experience of visiting a woman in a one-room hut containing all her possessions. As our group left, she came running to our bus and offered us a pack of homemade tortillas. If that wasn?t a testimony to the freedom, generosity, and trust in God that simplicity offers, I don?t know what is.

Simplicity is our friend because it makes room for God, creates a healthy dependency on God and others, and overcomes our pride and avarice. And besides all that, it makes us HAPPY! What?s not to love about it? Polls have shown that although Americans have doubled their standard of living in the past 50 years, the number of those who say they are very happy has gone down. One survey showed virtually the same level of happiness between the rich individuals on the Forbes 400 list and Maasai herdsman of East Africa.

Simplicity starts with the lure of its benefits, our spiritual hungering for deeper satisfaction than a designer handbag or 50-foot boat can give. Surely we can discard our worldly toys if we but know why and how. Rich and I will keep giving you motivation and ideas, so keep reading this blog!

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