

Sunday February 23, 2025
Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

Meditation: "GOK"

I don't know how many of you here are familiar with the abbreviation GOK, but if you've hung around the hospital or funeral home enough, you may know that it is sometimes listed as the cause of death.... GOK.... God Only Knows. I guess even doctors sometimes believe in God and not that they are God.

A few months before Barbara and I were to be wed, my ex-wife had a tragic mishap. She fell from her apartment balcony and broke the top two vertebrae in her spine and was transformed into a quadraplegic on a respirator for the remainder of her life. As she was the custodial parent, Barbara and I assumed that we were going to be instant parents to a 12 year old. As difficult as that thought was, it was even more difficult to learn that we weren't going to be instant parents. My former inlaws stepped in and said they would fight my custody in court. As a student, I had neither the money nor the time to devote to what could be a lengthy and expensive undertaking. In the end, Christina's aunt took her in and I said, somewhat prophetically, to Barbara that when she became an unmanageable nightmare, we would wind up with Christina. That is exactly what happened.

At the age of 14, we inherited an unmangable teen. She had a mouthful of cavities, some of which, we were warned, could require root canals; a case of head lice that took months of daily laundry and nitpicking to get under control; vision problems that required glasses; a diet that consisted of fast food only; and, eventually, we found out, undiagnosed ADHD. She also had no idea of how to use a can opener, how to use laundry equipment, how to use a stove to boil a pot of water, or the concepts of rules, limits, or consequences for your actions. We went through two years of well, what would you call it? Eventually, fearing for our own safety due to some incredibly risky behaviour that she was involved in, behaviour that not only was lifethreatening to Christina, but to us and to our neighbours, we parted ways.

GOK how we all got through that time, all three of us.

GOK how she managed to turn her life around, get a degree, make a life for herself, find a really nice husband, and have a happy baby.

GOK how we all managed to build healthy relationships now.

Jesus said, "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?" And then he said the impossible. "Love your enemies."

But God, it can be almost impossible to love family, to love flesh and blood.

Sometimes it's almost impossible for one partner to love the other.

Sometimes it's almost impossible to love children, parents, siblings...

GOK you you expect us to love our enemies.

Our society has become increasingly polarized and hostile. We have pro-immigration and anti-immigration. We have pro-pipeline and environmentalist. We have ham-fisted politicians and student protesters. We have white supremacists and those who want to embrace all people equally. We have left wing and right wing. We have fundamentalist Christian nationalists and progressive Christians. Increasingly people believe they have rights that are God given, inalienable and unlimited, and God help the person who tries to put limits or take away their rights. I think that the 'me' generation has been taken to the extreme and, with social media, people feel both anonymous and invincible. Loving family is hard enough, loving those who don't think like us is unimaginable, and loving enemies.... well, that's just plain absurd.

I'm not even sure I can imagine loving the arsonist who burned down my home, or the serial killer who killed a loved one, or the pedophile who molested my child, or the political leader in the next country who wants to destroy our economy and forcibly take control of our country, and half of the rest of the world.

I sometimes wonder what the world would look like today if the US had responded to the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 with massive amounts of foreign aid – aid to build schools and provide health care, and clean drinking water, and sanitary sewers, and food, and irrigation systems, and, and, and – instead of with billions of dollars worth of bombs and military force that killed ten, twenty, even thirty times, or more, the number of people who died in New York that day.

Love your enemy. Why would we do that? Why would we want to do that? Because God does. God causes the rain to fall and the sun to shine on the just and the unjust alike. To do other than to love our enemy is to fail ourselves, to fail who God created us to be, to fail our calling, and, ultimately, to fail God. Think about it, especially the next time you feel your blood rise.