

“THE LIFE WE HAVE LOST IN LIVING” LIVING A TRANQUIL LIFE

It was almost 4:00 p.m. this past Monday. My body clock was directing me into the confessional, even though I knew that we were on a holiday schedule— morning Mass, no confessions, offices closed. Check. But why was it **so difficult to step back** and take Labor Day off? I ran a brief errand, pondering upon why it is so difficult to slow down. Though I rarely go out of my way to advertise it, I often listen to Country Music while driving. I find it a welcome diversion and frankly, I can just give my mind a rest. Last week, an “oldie” popped up on the car radio, hitting me right between the eyes. “**Slow Down**” was playing, a ballad lamenting the “busy world” that “pulled away an old friend.” It continues: “But he’s not the same man I knew yesterday/The smile just grows smaller and smaller/And the worry lines fill up his face...You’re running too fast to see what life’s all about/This world ain’t a fire for you to put out/The best times are here and now/Slow down.” (Kenny Chesney)

Back from my errand and antsy, I picked up a book to relax. It was a bit of an “Augustine moment.” Recall, after endlessly searching for truth, while in a garden Augustine heard a child’s voice singing, “*tolle lege, tolle lege*,” “Take up and read, take up, read.” He opened his Bible and the first passage to which he turned, changed his life: “Let us then throw off the works of darkness [and] put on the armor of light...put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.” (Romans 13:14). That was the decisive moment that brought him to seek Baptism. Having no delusions of grandeur, I still took comfort when opening the book of poetry by **T. S. Eliot** (1888-1965), which was collecting dust on my shelf. Nevertheless, I sat down and opened it and the **very first poem** to which I turned, quite randomly, gave me the message I most needed to hear.

The endless cycle of idea in action,
Endless invention, endless experiment,
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the word.

Where is the life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
The cycles of heaven in 20 centuries
Bring us farther from God and nearer to the dust.

Opening Stanza *Choruses from the Rock*-1934

Saint Paul urges his flock to “aspire to live a tranquil life.” (1Thess. 4:11) The problem is in transforming that **aspiration into reality**. It is easy to say when you are not raising small children, trying to make ends meet, worrying about grandchildren or the state of society, the political landscape and a host of other things. Yet, if we wait until these and other concerns are resolved before seeking tranquility, we are never going to achieve it. It is a **gift** to be able to have **tranquility of heart** and soul amidst the challenges and vicissitudes of life. And many find it to be elusive.

Fra **Giovanni Giocondo** (c.1435–1515) was a Renaissance architect, engineer, antiquary, archaeologist, classical scholar, and Franciscan friar to boot. Some of his designs still stand 500 years later, including the **Ponte Notre-Dame** in Paris and a building boasting the best rooftop terrace in Venice. But in a letter to a friend named Countess Allagia, he showed a different side of himself, offering a **plea for calmness** amidst his spiritual advice. “No heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in it today. Take heaven! No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in this present little instant. Take peace! The gloom of the world is but a shadow. Behind it, yet within our reach, is joy. There is radiance and glory in darkness, could we but see. And to see, we have only to look. I beseech you to look!”

Let that sink in. I beseech you to look. What happens if we fail to stop long enough to pray, when we cease to reflect, wonder and ponder? Quite simply, it is the **life we have lost in living**. In a recent daily homily, Pope Francis spoke of this peace and tranquility. “Peace, the peace of Jesus, teaches us to go forward in life. It teaches us to endure. To endure: a word we don’t understand well, a very Christian word, it means to carry a burden. To endure, to carry the burden of life, the difficulties, the labor, everything, without losing peace; but rather bearing the burden and having the courage to go forward. This can only be understood when there is the Holy Spirit within, who gives us the peace of Jesus.” In his *City of God*, St. Augustine called peace “**the tranquility of order.**” (*De civ. Dei*, 19, 13.1) May we pray for tranquility today and every day, knowing that only in God will our souls find rest.

- “Touch ‘em all!” The **Minnesota Twins** smashed Major League Baseball’s record for the most homeruns in a single season at 269, and there are still three weeks to play. Last year, the team hit 166.
- Speaking of records...I had to go back to the State Fair for my Strawberry Malt (and a few other items). It was worth it. The “Park and Ride” (walk in my case) from the St. Paul College is a great option. I met up with a few friends and while patronizing the Dairy building, visited with Princess Kay of the Milky Way. More than 2.1 million attended the Fair this year, setting an all-time record!
- Stop by our Museum next Sunday following the 10:00 a.m. Mass. A **new exhibit** debuts, dedicated to the immigrants who settled in St. Paul and Minneapolis and who contributed to the building of our Cathedral. It highlights the history and decoration of the six Shrines of the Nations.
- Shameless! An article by Marissa Brostoff in **The Washington Post** linked the anti-abortion movement with white nationalism by implying that when Catholic author J.D. Vance lamented “our declining birthrate,” he was referring to whites. The context of his article **clearly indicates** that the “our” referred to our nation as a whole. The Post issued a clarification, sending Brostoff on a Twitter rant, saying the Post caved to pressure. No, they corrected a scurrilous and unsubstantiated claim. Ironically, Vance’s wife is East Asian.
- A victory for conscience? The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights issued a **notice of violation** to the University of Vermont Medical Center for its failure to respect the **conscience rights** of a Catholic nurse who has claimed that she was coerced into assisting at an abortion. She had previously asserted her convictions and claims she was tricked into thinking it was a miscarriage procedure. Time will tell how her lawsuit progresses.
- Let us pray for the victims of Hurricane Dorian. On Abaco Island in the Bahamas, 60% of all homes have been severely damaged or completely destroyed.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel
Rector