



Fr. Matt's Musings

March 31, 2017

Nice, the death knell!

At times, I find myself lazily using language, and I revert back to familiar words. One such example is my use of "nice." When I am in the company of fellow anglophones from other nations, I am struck by their accents and the use of certain words. I love when someone from Great Britain or Ireland says that something is "lovely" or "brilliant," or when an Australian refers to me as "mate." They are lively, descriptive terms that evoke an emotional response from me. Similarly, when an American says that something is "awesome" or "great," it touches my heart. By contrast, when I say or hear that something is nice, it strikes me differently. It feels less lovely or brilliant. I think that nice is an overused word in our society. It can be a compliment, which I think it is usually meant to be. It can also be a placeholder, a death knell that says that something was neither great nor awful.

C.S. Lewis wrote that one of his fears was that his tombstone would say, "He was a nice guy." St. Francis de Sales writes that we should be hot or cold, but not lukewarm. Our yes should be a yes and a no, no. It causes me to think about my use of words: my throw away words, my overused ones, the words that try to soften a situation or avoid tension, and the words that give life, can be powerful enough to give comfort, offer forgiveness, challenge an individual and change a life for the better or worse. Let us choose our words well. Nice has its place but frequently lovely, brilliant, awesome or another more expressive term might voice our thoughts more clearly and forcefully.

Have a brilliant, lovely weekend!

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