



Fr. Matt's Musings September 29, 2017

Jesus came to save sinners; I plan to make it worth his while. (Bumper sticker)

Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes. (Mahatma Gandhi)

Our perfection is not that we are perfect, but that we are trying. (Francis de Sales)

Northern Virginia is a difficult place to talk about imperfection and the freedom to fail. Type A personalities, competition for the best schools and jobs and the internal and external pressures: to succeed, to keep up with or to fit in can create an environment of great anxiety and stress. It can also lead to unreachable goals and unrealistic expectations. Our nature is limited and prone to make mistakes and to fail.

In the gospels, it is the tax collectors and sinners who first understand Jesus and his message. They are keenly aware of their imperfections and are receptive to a message of mercy and divine love and hospitality of our successes and of our faults and failings. St. Francis de Sales asks us to embrace the totality of our humanity, including our abjections (weaknesses, warts, faults and inconsistencies) because they can more profoundly lead us to God and our total dependence on God and God's love and mercy.

Hopefully, the bumper sticker at the beginning of this reflection can help us laugh at some of our unrealistic expectations. St. Francis de Sales wants us to set high standards and goals but also make peace when we do not always meet them through human limitations. What a great gift when we can live in an environment where risk is encouraged but also failure is accepted as a by product of those who have the courage to try new things instead of playing it safe and living always with what is familiar, safe and secure.

I conclude with these words from the songwriter Leonard Cohen:

"Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in."

Live Jesus!

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