

Knights of Columbus Meeting of State Deputies

Introduction

In case you haven't noticed, charity and love are risky. In fact, today's Scripture readings say as much. And that should be of the greatest concern to an organization that sells life insurance and has charity as its first principle. Let me explain.

In that long reading from the Book of Tobit, we meet Tobit's son Tobias. Tobias is accompanied by the Archangel Raphael and they are on their way to cure Tobit's sudden blindness. Truth to tell, they don't seem to be in much of a hurry. On the way, they decided to stay with Tobias' relative, Raguel who had a daughter named Sarah. Well, sometime during dinner Tobias noticed Sarah and Sarah noticed Tobias. Trouble is, Sarah had been married seven times before and all seven of her husbands had met an untimely end on their wedding night. Undeterred, Raguel told Tobias how very welcome he was to marry his daughter. Tobias was clearly a man of faith and it seems he loved Sarah (evidently people made up their minds quicker in those days)— but seven husbands dead on their wedding night – Tobias was really taking a risk. No wonder he suggested to Sarah that they pray on *their* wedding night.

Married love entails plenty of risks, maybe not seven previous husbands all dead on their wedding night, but plenty of risks nonetheless. The wedding vows don't give a lot of comfort here – start with the first few words: “for better or for worse...” Those of you who are married can fill in the blanks. The open-ended sacrifices of marriage and family elude ordinary risk analysis. After all, marriage is rooted in and reflects the self-giving love of the Trinity, the love that prompted the Father to send us his Son to die for our sins. You reflect in real life terms the risk God took in loving his people.

The Golden Rule

But enough about Tobias, you might be saying just about now, what about the Golden Rule that Jesus proposes in today's Gospel: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.

The second is this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Sounds like a good bet, we might say, who can argue with loving God and neighbor.

But wait a minute! Did I hear correctly? “I’m supposed to love God with all my heart,” the inmost depth of my being from which all my thoughts, words, and decisions come? And did you say, ‘all my soul’ – my whole self as a living being? Did you also say, ‘all my mind’, that is, all my powers of reasoning and judgment? And just to be sure, you included ‘all my strength’, that is, every ounce of my energy? Sounds like a lot, in fact everything—all that I am and all that I have. As for loving my neighbor as myself, well, I love myself quite a bit. That’s not only a challenge, that’s risking everything!”

St. John Paul II said that our lives make no sense without love. He didn’t merely mean receiving love but giving and receiving love. Nothing satisfies the human spirit except God’s infinitely self-giving love, a love that prompted God to risk everything for us and for our salvation. We are not happy until we take the risk of loving God totally. And we will not love God totally unless we love our neighbor, even when our neighbor makes himself or herself quite un-loveable.

Turns out Father McGivney made a good bet when he based our Order on charity. In the end, there are three things that last, “faith, hope, and love and the greatest of these is love.”