



I swear!

As I've spent the past week roaming around central Victoria with my family, I haven't had time to prepare a reflection for the Update this week. However, I would like to - briefly - share with you one event that occurred while we were away.

In the hotel in Bendigo where we stayed, there was a dining area that served both breakfast and dinner for hotel guests. One morning, as Sandy, Sophia and I were eating our breakfast, I became aware of a group at an adjacent table. They consisted mostly of young people who seemed to range in age from late teens to early twenties; and, from their (loud) conversation, it became clear they were involved in some form of school ministry.

But what really grabbed my attention was when the leader, a rather self-assured young woman, explained to the group how they should organise the students they dealt with into "possies" in order to make it easier to engage in "God talk" and cover subjects such as how they might not get into heaven if they swear a lot and use bad language.

I must admit, I almost choked on my coffee; and, from the look on her face, so did Sandy. The absurdity of the situation was reinforced when, having obviously overheard the remarks and with a somewhat puzzled expression on her face, Sophia said: "But you two swear all the time!"

It's true, I do swear a lot. You might not hear me; but the fact is, "bad language" is a part of my everyday vocabulary. As, I suspect, it is for most people. And while we might be tempted to laugh at the scenario I've described above, I think it has some serious repercussions.

Because what this young woman was articulating was the kind of small-minded view of God that depicts God as a kind of overseer, a celestial accountant who marks down every transgression and short-coming - however slight - and who holds these failings against us. This is a God, not of compassion, but of judgement; a God, not of love, but of condemnation. It is certainly not the God I recognise and serve.

Likewise, this is a view that imagines the life of faith is about "earning your ticket to heaven" through personal piety and a rather sanctimonious approach to behaviour - indeed, which makes "sin" all about outward behaviour rather than internal attitudes. This, in my view - and I think it is a view that is backed by history - that leads, not to the Gospel or the solidarity of God, but to human hypocrisy and self-serving oppressiveness.

All-too-often, our view of God attempts to reduce God to human measures, to standards and configurations that suit our own purposes or reflect our own agendas. And in doing so, we make God inhuman - that is to say, a God who has no interest in humanity, in the dignity of our creation, and in reconciling the life of the world to the life of God. In doing so, we make God a god of cruelty and power - an idol, not the source and ground of our being.

Remember In Your Prayers

Please continue to remember in your prayers Alison Ingamells and the whole Ingamells family after the recent passing of David Ingamells. Pray that God's grace and peace will be with them at this sad time.

Working Bee

A Working Bee will take place on Saturday 20th April 2024, many hands make light work so please give some thought to helping keep our property safe and in good condition. There are lots of small jobs that could be tackled. Starting at 9am and with morning tea provided, how could you miss this opportunity.

Mal McDonald Secretary - Property Committee

Blessings,

Brendan



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