

Midweek Reflection # 12 ~ “I will trust you always”

“My Lord God. I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore **I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.**” ~ Thomas Merton, Thoughts in Solitude

I was reminded of this beautiful prayer of trust a few weeks ago by a good friend and spiritual mentor who actually recited the prayer to me over the phone. I remember using the prayer on a graduation card which we gave to every senior leaving our Young Life campaigners Bible study group a number of years ago. I went looking and actually found a few of the cards in my desk. The front of the card was illustrated with a Walt Kelly cartoon image of Pogo, happily gliding along in a hot-air balloon, dropping “footprints” onto the path below. I don’t know what it meant to those college freshmen, but I prayed the prayer for them very seriously as we watched them float off into the future.

Now, instead of encouraging trust in God’s care as the unknown “perils” of college life approach, the prayer has significant meaning for my family as we “dance around another dark corner” into a clinical research trial for cancer subjects.

Merton’s prayer really does bring us back, full circle, to the Joan Chittister quote on hope and despair which we took with us into the hospital in May for my surgery:

“Hope takes life on its own terms, knows that whatever happens God lives in it, and expects that, whatever its twists and turns, it will ultimately yield its good to those who live it well... Hope sends us dancing around dark corners trusting in a tomorrow we cannot see.”

We are learning a lot about the daily, hourly choice between hope and despair. It is not at all easy and there have been a few tears along the way. But the confidence that God does not “leave us to face our perils alone” has been consistently reinforced. Just today I came across this encouraging thought from Henri Nouwen: “Hope prevents us from clinging to what we have and frees us to move away from the safe place and enter unknown and fearful territory.”

Your continued prayers and encouragement remain a constant source of hope for us. Thank you.

Under God’s Mercy,

Howie