

“Hear me roar!”

It seems that vehicles get ever louder, whether it be the seemingly inexhaustible myriad of muscle cars, loud motorcycles, souped-up pickups, or whatever. I’ve always been quite fond of quiet, so riding in a deafening vehicle never appealed. But, I suppose, it comes from the hormonally-fueled desire to dominate, and the roaring, beating of the chest, bellowing, etc., are primal declarations of strength and power—real or simply postured—a challenging to all hearers a contest of dominance ... if they dare. “I’m louder, thus faster, stronger, better!” ... and so forth. And then, too, is the fascination with the “rebel”—setting oneself apart from the crowd ... being the “bad boy/girl.”

Now, Catholic clergy have various prayers and reading we do every day—part of adhering to the “pray always” exhortation given to Christians by St. Paul in “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) Catholics also celebrate various saints on annual memorial days. So, each October 20 we commemorate another St. Paul—St. Paul of the Cross, including some of his writing. The chosen excerpt of his includes a phrase which strikes as ought to be a common goal of all Christians and, indeed, all peoples—that of “heroic goodness.”

While we give such goodness and charity a lot of lip service, few of us actually practice it to the extent that we may be able. The younger among us fear being labeled a “goody-goody” or some similarly childish descriptor. But oddly enough, even the older set fear of being labeled as “boring,” “having no life,” etc., if not participating in raucous activity ... not being “bad” or “daring” enough. If we feel like we must do bad things to be popular or accepted, what does that say about our own moral courage? What does it say about the company we keep ... the company we value? We’re reminded of: “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals.’ Come to your right mind, and sin no more.” (1 Corinthians 15:33-34) And, O Christian, don’t fall for that juvenile “What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas” mentality, for nothing “stays in Vegas.” Do you not remember: “Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.”? (Luke 12:2)

But we also fear for ours and our families’ livelihoods, that there may be some sort of retaliation if we do the right thing against those more powerful or influential than ourselves. But do we not admire “whistleblowers” for coming forward to expose the darkness of wrongdoing? Is it not cowardice to refrain from doing the good because of people’s opinions or consequences? Courage is not courage if nothing is risked, and as the famous quotation goes: “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing” ... evil being all sorts of evil: persecution, hunger, injustice, etc.

Maybe instead of being rebels without a cause, we should be rebels WITH a cause—the cause of practicing that “heroic goodness” cited by St. Paul of the Cross, and in that way be TRUE rebels—rebellious against rebellion, as it were. Our joy is found in seeking the good, not the selfish “excitement” of wrongdoing. Fulfillment comes not only from bringing out the best in ourselves, but striving to bring out the best in others—both active charity from within, and the joy and security and ease of conscience they lack when they were not assisted with what we are able to assist them with. After all, is not the second great commandment is “Love thy neighbor as thyself”? And we need remember the root of “commandment”: command ... the command of our Lord to each of us.

Can we expect we can be lazily indifferent to God’s command and be approved? So we each must consider: “Am I investing the talent entrusted to me well, or will my gift be considered as lame, blind, unworthy return for His goodness to me?” We desire goodness from the Lord towards us; are we to refuse to give what we ourselves request? Do we expect generosity when we are tight-fisted? Do we seek forgiveness, yet refuse to forgive? Is this not hypocrisy? “The measure will be the measure you get back.” (Mark 4:24)

Everyone wants to be a hero to someone, and yet we have such opportunities daily, even multiple times a day. The hero is not one who waits for the best opportunity for himself to shine—that’s simply vainglory; they true hero sees the need and does his best to succor the need ... now. So let us ever seek to roar Christian virtue by manifesting heroic goodness in all things and at all times, for God does not withhold such grace from those who ever seek righteousness and charity.

“Then the King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’” (Matthew 25:34-40)

*Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your doings
from before my eyes;
cease to do evil, learn to do good;
seek justice, correct oppression;
defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.*

*Come now, let us reason together,
says the Lord:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.
If you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the land....*

(Isaiah 1:16-19)