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Speech: You Can Make a Difference - Marquette University

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Marquette University

You can make a difference

Introduction

Mr President

St Award me the the Marquette Discovery Awards with such a glorious honor as a member of Astronauts

Greetings- Thanks for the great distinction bestowed on me. I have usually said of *And may I salute the best remarkable woman Judy Kayette who I suspect is doing something to do with my big head and all these others who have helped* such honors that I receive them in a representative capacity that the real heroes and *to organize my*

heroines are the millions back home who were the real stalwarts of our struggle. I have *with all together Janet Stiles who let me see his v. comfortable place* frequently said when one is in a crowd and stands out; it is only because one is being carried on the shoulders of others. After all what is a leader without followers? Don't go away with the idea that 'oh isn't he nice, he's so modest'. I am not conventionally modest, I can assure you. Once my wife and I were visiting West Point Military Academy and at the end of the visit the cadets gave me a cap as a memento. It did not fit me. A nice wife would have said "Oh the cap is too small". My wife speaking from the knowledge of 48 years of marriage said "His head is too big!"

God's Ways

Isn't it quite extraordinary how God chooses to operate in the world? This omnipotent, omniscient one who created all there is without our help, how is it that God has seemed to insist that with the advent of humans, God would never again undertake any project on earth without enlisting the partnership, the collaboration of God's human creatures? And so God creates man and woman in God's image and they are from then expected to act as God's representatives, God's stand-ins, God's stewards operating on behalf of God with God in tandem as co creators, as collaborators, to have dominion over

the rest of God's creation. There is the call of Abram which is the prelude to the call of an entire people to be a light to the nations, to be collaborators with God, in the God project, the divine enterprise of redeeming God's creation to bring all things to unity in Christ Jesus, all that had disintegrated because of the fissiparousness, the centrifugal power of sin.

As just one example, which could be a paradigm is how God sets about to redeem the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. No one doubts that God could, in a sense did, accomplish the Exodus with no help from anyone. And yet look at the pains God ~~went~~^{took} to persuade Moses to be God's partner, being willing to jeopardize the success of this enterprise by having a bungling fellow worker. "Moses" –'Hi God.' "Will you please go down to Pharaoh...?" 'What, God you can't be serious!' "Do you know why I am here in Midian?" 'It was to escape the wrath of Pharaoh and you want me to do, what? To go back there. No God, and in any case God (you know he is telling the omniscient one!) God I stammer. Please send Aaron, he is eloquent!'

Remarkable that God had to spend so much time when God could just have gone ahead with the business of the Exodus. After all it was God who would visit the Egyptians with the plagues and it would be God's power that would let the waters of the Red Sea overwhelm the hosts of Egypt. It must be that God took very seriously the contribution, however miniscule, from God's human partner. It was for real that God wanted it always to be theandric project. We see it too in the way God had to convince a very reluctant Jeremiah to take on the onerous vocation, really a thankless task, of being Yahweh's prophet. To persuade this sensitive, retiring soul God makes a tremendous

Translated from

assertion. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. You are not an afterthought; you have been part of my plans, my purpose from all eternity." None of us is an afterthought. None of us is an accident. We might, some of us, look like accidents but none is. Fantastic. All this just so that God would have a human collaborator in the divine enterprise.

"Knock, knock." "Who's there?" "Gabriel." "Gabriel who?" "Gabriel the Archangel. Hi Mary." "Hello." "Mary God would like you to be the mother of his Son?" "What, you can't be serious. You know in this village you can't scratch yourself without everyone knowing about it and you want me to be a what-an unmarried mother? Sorry, I'm a decent girl, try next door." Had that been the final response we would have been up a creek. Mercifully, she said "Behold the handmaid of the Lord be it unto me according to thy Word" and the whole universe breathed a cosmic sigh of relief and the incarnation could happen and our salvation be on the way to being accomplished.

God's methods

Those who would be so enlisted would be persons who might help to reflect the characteristics of their divine partner. The world we inhabit has always been the theatre for power play. Mostly, the powerful would seem to exercise power that was coercive, that would be expressed through verbs in the imperative mood. God's power turned out to be different. God power mostly was persuasive power; that sought to woo the other, not to control, not to manipulate the other. It turned out to be kenotic power, power demonstrated in being poured out, emptied on behalf of the others. This seems to be the

only way God could be God where from all eternity to all eternity the Father poured out all the Father's being into the Son who in his turn poured out his being in a mutual self emptying and this dynamic way of being was Holy Spirit binding the three with this eternal movement of self emptying donation.

And so when God created us, then there was no way in which God could retract the gift of personhood with its freedom to choose to love or to hate, to obey or to disobey, to accept or to reject the gift of divine love and life. God would show forth a profound reverence for our creaturely autonomy, our personal space so that God had much rather we went freely to hell than compel us to go to heaven. And whenever we made, were about to make the wrong choice God did not intervene except in a rejectable offer of grace to choose right. God could only, as it were, look on impotently and there was nothing God could do to nullify our freedom.

All God could do was to wait eagerly, expectantly, impotently for the prodigal to return from the far country and when God espied us way away in the distance, God thrust aside, threw off all the divine right to heavenly dignity and lifted God's skirt to reveal his ankles, brazenly, shamelessly to rush ^uindignifiedly down the main street of the village, to the chagrin of the pompous ones, to embrace the lost one who had been found; the dead one who had come to life again, to embrace this one covered in the grime of a pigsty, smelling to high heaven to smother him with kisses, having the servants dress him in the best robe and to have the fatted calf killed-causing so much consternation, outraging the prim and proper ones, being a God with such disgracefully low standards who would let

there be greater joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 who needed no repentance.

The divine power is shown more gloriously, most paradoxically in weakness, in the one who emptied himself of all claims to divine dignity and authority and took on the form of a servant, being born not in a royal palace but in a stable of parents who did not even have the clout to get a room in the village inn, who became obedient even unto death. (The supreme, the ultimate form of kenosis, of self emptying) and not a particularly attractive form of death, but the excruciating being done to death of a notorious felon. St. John referred hardly ever to Jesus dying but almost always to his glorification, his exaltation, his being lifted up, and always not for self aggrandizement but for the sake of others. ^I“If I be lifted up, ~~I~~ will draw all to me. This is my Body given up for you, my blood shed for you, and my life given as a ransom for many.” Therefore, God has highly exalted him... It turns out that there is no other way to true glory.

In the World

In the world we have seen so frequently people seeking power of all kinds* especially coercive, controlling power, shunting others around; the power of money, ^{subtle power} political power, prestige etc...Power ultimately for self glorification, for self aggrandizement and we have equally frequently been attracted to such as moths to a light. It has hardly ever been that it was life enhancing for others, it has mesmerized and attracted hangers-on frequently again kow towing, sychophantie,obsequious,- who would not say “boo” to a goose, telling the boss what they think the boss wants to know, not the

often uncomfortable awkward truths. And yet a paradoxical feature of our success oriented societies is that this hardnosed often cynical ones ^{not} ~~into~~ rever^{ed} the macho, the aggressive ones.

No, it is such as a Mother Theresa, a Mahatma Gandhi, a Martin Luther King, or a Dalai Lama, a Nelson Mandela. Now in different ways they have been or are leaders who have reflected the divine pattern of power- vulnerable, weak, persuasive, kenotic. They have almost without exception suffered which is a good sign of not doing something for self aggrandizement. They have possessed few, if any of the conventional instruments of coercive power. Theirs has been a life poured out on behalf of others and people have recognized something they seem to have known in the tribal past, goodness. They have antennae which ^m ~~home~~ in on goodness, on caring, on compassion, on gentleness, on wanting to coax the best out of others. God wants to enlist us, you and me in the God project, in the God enterprise, as God's fellow workers, not paragons of perfection, anything but for almost always God's servants, partners have been flawed. Abraham was ready to pass off his wife as his sister to save his skin. Moses was short-tempered breaking tablets of the Law in anger, David was an adulterer, Peter denied his master not once but three times, Saul was a persecutor of the infant Christian community and even after his conversion had a very short fuse and was given ^{to} a great deal of self justification and could wish that his circumcising opponents in Galatia would mutilate themselves. Yes, we have this treasure in earthen vessels so that it can be clear, the abundant glory belongs to God.

God the dreamer, the utopian who believes that we, His human creatures are family created for togetherness to live in a delicate network of complementarity[†] and interdependence, enlists us in the God project of realizing this dream^{the} of actualization of being the family of God, the rainbow people of God. God asks us to be agents of transfiguration. The God, who could transfigure an instrument of the most excruciatingly painful and shameful death into the source of a tingling, effervescent, eternal life, to proclaim that nothing, no one, no situation could ever be untransfigurable. Nothing, no one, no situation is beyond redemption, is totally devoid of hope. This God, who could snuff out all troublemakers, does not dispatch perpetrators of evil, those who rule unjustly and oppress others. No, God ^{waits} ~~works~~ on us as those who will provide the bread and the fish so that God can perform God's miracles to end injustice and oppression, to end war, disease and ignorance. **This God who apart from us will not as we apart from God cannot.**

And your particular contribution is actually indispensable, for you are unique. There is mercifully no one quite like me not even my twin. In a symphony orchestra, the players are dolled out in formal wear and they play some spectacular instruments, the cellos, the violins, the oboes, the Frenchhorns etc... Often at the back of the orchestra is someone dressed equally formally with a triangle and in an elaborate work, the conductor will now and again point to the player with the triangle and he will strike it, 'ping'. Now that might seem insignificant and ^y get in the conception of the composer something indispensable would be lost to the total beauty of the composition if that "ping" did not happen there We may not all accomplish spectacular achievements but something would

be missing, that is irreplaceable if we, our peculiar contribution were to go missing. *It God*
quite breathtakingly unbelievably
 needs us, needs me, needs you.

We could never be presumptuous to think that we have been chosen because of our ^{also} more intellectual ~~trials~~ or other excellence. For God's standards are high. You see we have been called to be like God, perfect as God is perfect, holy as God is holy, compassionate as God is compassionate, and so in a way the world does not comprehend but will almost always admire. We must let our sun shine on the good and the bad, to let our rain fall on the just and the unjust.

We are to have the bias of God who had/has a soft spot for the weak, the oppressed, and the marginalized. Thus, God's favorites are the widow, the orphan and the alien, in most societies those with the least clout, the weakest of the weak. Thus God accompanied, not with Archbishops and such like, but with prostitutes, the despised and sinners. The scum of society and most marginalized. That is where we would be, be there ^{for} ~~to~~ them to be kenotic, those whose lives are poured out on behalf of others.

We must scandalise the world as we get to love not to hate our enemies, as we pray for those who abuse us, as we bless and not curse those who deal with us spitefully. It will all be foolishness to the world which says give as good as you get, you must strike preemptively before ^{they} ~~it was~~ get you. God is crazy-how can the omnipotent be so weak as to die so shamefully on the Cross? How can the eternal die? The foolishness of God is wiser than men. The weakness of God is stronger than men.

In a culture that makes an obsession, a fetish of activity, busyness and achievement, perhaps nothing seems so foolish for being at odds with the prevalent

For Jesus

Family is not just a mere sentimental figure of speech

It is the most radical liberal thought Jesus uttered. For he could say to Mary Magdalene

after his resurrection, "I choose those who had

betrayed, denied & forsaken him "Tell my brothers

that I ascend to my Father & their Father" ^{as if we were ordering breakfast}

How could we contemplate so nonchalantly the prospect

of visiting devastation & death on these others if we are family?

How could we go on spending such obscene amounts on

budgets of death & destruction when a ^{we know that} small fraction of those

budgets could ensure that those others had clean water, enough

to eat, a good education, adequate health care & secure homes

if they are indeed family?

God weeps as God looks on what we are doing & contemplate

doing to one another the just war messy postulates

a legitimate authority declaring & waging a war it was

against Iraq declared unilaterally by the US would be no

one declared by an illegitimate authority so would be

an immoral war. God smiles thru the tears to see the

many offenses this war. This is a great country, a

generous country, a compassionate country, a

country that helped to set Nelson Mandela out of

prison, which helped to make life free & democratic

that is your legacy, your tradition, why want to

dash it with a war that the world opposes

Help to wipe the tears from God's eyes

culture than those who would do nothing but seek to be quiet as they spend themselves in contemplation. What are you doing to justify your existence? We try to be still and so to know God. We will discover perhaps one day, how much we have owed for our continued existence to those who chose the better thing, to sit quietly at the Master's feet to be just there, to be.

Ultimately, it is the power of the Cross that overcomes evil and death. It is the power of love that overcomes hate. Unless we take up our cross to follow our Master, we cannot be His disciples. A church that does not suffer cannot be the Church of Jesus

Christ and only through that Cross can it be that. "If I be lifted up, will draw all to me."

And we may suffer to witness that in this family

There are no outsiders. All belong as insiders, all belong in this family-all, not some, all, black and white, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, gay and straight, man and women, young and old, Serbs and Albanians, Palestinians and Israelis, Sharon and Arafat, Roman Catholics and Protestants, George Bush and Saddam Hussein, Colin Powell and Bin Laden, all are members of one family, sisters and brothers, one family, the human family, God's family, the rainbow people of God.

And nothing is lost, it does not evaporate into the ether, the loving, the praying, the suffering courageously even if anonymously. No, it impregnates the atmosphere, as when you know this is a happy home without being told. The vibes enter the fabric or when you know this is a prayed in church. It is redolent of sanctuary. Nothing is lost. One day in the fullness of time, it will all come to a head as when freedom suddenly broke out in so many in such likely places, Russia, SA etc...

And God says you can make a difference, you can help me realize my dream.

that my children you are family