

## Monastic Scribe XI: September 17, 2021

### AVOIDING DESPAIR

I am humbled and very appreciative of the many people who have responded to my previous blogs. I have heard sadness, anger, disillusionment, betrayal, doubt and confusion. I have also heard deep faith in the presence of God in the midst of all the pain and chaos of life. I have heard people's trust and courage in continuing to live their faith and work for a better world. Only one or two have tried to block out what is happening around us, to run from it, to hide from it. All are helping me to deal with my own recurring anger and sadness and not be overwhelmed by it.

How do you cope with a world wide situation where a virus continues to take lives daily? How do you bring up children and believe in a better world when we are told of the climate change that is threatening life on the entire planet, human as well as animal, plant life, air and water?

What can we do about our country where there are fears voiced that we may lose our democracy? Telling the truth, accepting scientific facts, no less than to adhere to traditional moral values, have been shunted aside and sometimes ridiculed. We have a Congress that is driven by the desire to be reelected and not by working together for the good of all the country. We have had a campaign based on "Make America Great Again" which really means putting women, blacks and Muslims back in their place. American culture is infested with individualism, greed, the desire for comfort and pleasure. Am I too negative?

I believe this is a time when the churches, faith traditions, the perennial philosophy of civilizations are needed more than ever. But churches are weak and the Catholic Church is bent over from the burden of the pedophilia crisis, and its seeming devaluation of women. Let's stop complaining about what is wrong and be more determined to do whatever improves life around us. Edmund Burke, famous Irish statesman, said that the only way for evil to prevail is for good people to do nothing.

Change, the cry for justice, at times comes from above. The Pope is trying to change the ethos of the church but is not getting a lot of assistance. There are those who steadfastly do not want any change.

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They want to go back to the good old days. Such are those who want the Tridentine Mass, in Latin of course. It confirms passivity, clericalism. Let the priest do it all. Another group wants change and wants it now! They think they know exactly what needs to be done, not only locally, but throughout the world. Without realizing it they are also often adherents of passivity and clericalism. They rely on Pope and Bishops to make the changes they want. No doubt we must have many changes. But it must begin with our attitude, formed in faith, hope and love. The church we need is a community of believers who support us and challenge us along the way. The institution is not the church but should serve the community. Right now it needs wholesale change.

The Pope is trying to shift the authority away to local churches which he means both priests and lay. He needs our help. There are other things needed. A whole new moral theology of sexuality is called for. The old one, based on medieval biology, is not useful. But we must believe the Holy Spirit is still with us and can bring new life to our midst.

Richard Rohr, in founding the Center for Action and Contemplation thirty years ago was largely concerned with activists who burn out. They need to have a contemplative side to their life. Our base is in a God who is always present to us.

So we can't give up the good fight. We are here on earth for others and to make things better. Let's not give up. Let me know what you think at [joycet@glastonburyabbey.org](mailto:joycet@glastonburyabbey.org)

And here is a prayer from Saint Teresa of Avila:

Let nothing disturb you Let nothing frighten you  
All things pass away; God never changes.  
Patience obtains all things.  
The person who has God finds one lacks nothing,  
God alone suffices.

**Fr. Timothy Joyce, OSB, STL**

Please note that I do not speak on behalf of Glastonbury Abbey, the Archdiocese of Boston or the Catholic Church, though I hope my faith is in harmony with all these. Any error in judgment should be credited to me and not anyone else.