

September 4, 2016

But Nobody Ever Told Me... XXVI

Tradition is surprisingly fragile. Once a link of the chain is broken, it is extremely difficult to reattach—and if it effects a second link—almost impossible. What often happens in many disciplines is that an older generation assumes that the younger generation knows how and why certain things are done. We can see this in everything from sports practices to cooking recipes.

Last week, I mentioned that there is a significant amount of private revelation which states that the vast majority of souls in hell are there because of unforgiveness. We are certainly not required to believe private revelation, however, it is always worth pondering and weighing against what we know are the Truths of our Faith. In this case, speaking for myself, I have a moral certainty that this is true. Let's look at why.

If you remember, in late summer/early autumn of last year I did a series in this spot on Anger and Forgiveness. This week, we will briefly reprise the section of that on unforgiveness.

In the 7th installment of that series, we discussed that while genuine Anger is not a sin, grudges, resentments, etc. *are* sinful. They are a genuine spiritual malady, so it is useful to speak in those terms. They are sinful because when we embrace these, the resulting feeling of 'Anger' is not being elicited from external stimuli, but is being willfully summoned from within. Authentic Anger is always and only an internal reaction summoned by an external stimulus.

"Unforgiveness" is a useful expression for false (internally summoned) 'anger' because it also points to the solution. Unforgiveness is when we hold onto the feelings of Anger through *our choice*. Why would someone do that?

Anger is a powerful feeling and can often be used as a form of self-medication. What do I mean? Just like summoning an adrenaline response in order to perform at a higher level in sports, the feelings of Anger make us *feel* strong. In fact, because of the accompanying adrenaline response, we actually *are* stronger.

When we have been violated, we do not feel strong but weak. Therefore, since it is preferable to feel strong, I will do whatever I must to stop feeling weak. Every time I feel inadequate or weak I remember the offense and *feel stronger* because of the resulting *feeling* of Anger. The problem is twofold: 1) this is not authentic Anger, but has been summoned—like picking a scab, and 2) this state never resolves and we have to work at it harder and harder. To be released from this cycle, we must be willing to forgive.

Next week we will reprise the section on Forgiveness, and in light of that, the following week I will show why I am certain that most souls in hell are there because of unforgiveness.

Fr. Michael