

## **A Different Approach to Life**

**October 1, 2017**

**“They say that Richard Cory owns one half of this whole town  
With political connections to spread his wealth around  
Born into society a banker's only child  
He had everything a man could want power, grace and style  
But I work in his factory and I curse the life I'm living  
And I curse my poverty and I wish that I could be  
Oh I wish that I could be Oh I wish that I could be Richard Cory**

**“He freely gave to charity he had the common touch  
And they were grateful for his patronage and they thanked him very much  
So my mind was filled with wonder when the evening headlines read  
Richard Cory went home last night and put a bullet through his head  
But I work in his factory and I curse the life I'm living  
And I curse my poverty and I wish that I could be  
Oh I wish that I could be Oh I wish that I could be Richard Cory”.**

**Simon and Garfunkel sang this story of Richard Cory. telling everyone that he had the material pleasures that anyone might want, but these pleasures failed to make him happy. And so he ended his life.**

**Hugh Hefner died this week. Hefner exemplified hedonism, the pursuit of pleasure. (We will not even consider how he objectified and degraded women.) He died at a ripe old age; not like Richard Cory, not by a bullet to the brain. I have no evidence that he regretted his course of living.**

**Christianity presents a vastly different approach to life. Today's epistle reading expresses it well: “You are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”**

**So much of Christianity's promise is not for stuff, for wealth or beauty or fame. Instead it is for a relationship with God. We heard today, “I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters.” At the end of the book of Revelation we read, “The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying.” We read parables in which God is portrayed as a King or a rich man who invites his friends to share a banquet with Him. The reward of Christianity is not that of Richard Cory or Hugh Hefner.**

Christianity is often viewed as boring, the path of elderly prudes or angry old men. It is viewed as a denial of fun, of pleasure, of joy- I get it. Far too often Christians or Christianity is seen as against this or condemning that, rather than being for something. But here, in St. Paul's words, are a positive affirmation of what Christianity's goal is. "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

I recall a story from the book of Daniel. Three young Jewish men in the service of King Nebuchadnezzar were arrested for refusing to worship a statue of the King. They are brought before the King, close to a fiery furnace where they would be burned to death, and the King asked them, "Who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?" The physical reality was right there for all to see, and he challenged the young men's faith in a God not so easily discerned.

The young men chose the spiritual path, the path of faith, of fidelity to a God who is invisible but nevertheless real and present. They chose the path of hope in a greater existence. "I will be live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Orthodox Christianity holds that the goal of life is "theosis," the idea that we humans can share in God's glory to a small extent. We have small tastes of this in Biblical images, such as Moses's face glowing with a divine light after close encounters with God, and such as the shadow of St. Peter healing the sick. We see this in the lives of saints who in life healed the sick and in death exude myrrh, scented oil, oil that heals the sick. We see it in saints whose bodies do not decompose, or whose tombs become a locale for miracles.

"I curse the life I'm living  
And I curse my poverty and I wish that I could be  
Oh I wish that I could be Oh I wish that I could be Richard Cory."

Yes, the appeal of lesser pleasures is always there. At some time or another we all wish that we could be Richard Cory or Hugh Hefner or Bill Gates or someone else. Theirs are very tangible rewards. But we look for something higher.

Fr. Stephen J. Callos

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Text: Brethren, you are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 6:16-18; 7:1).