

CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS: IMPLICATIONS FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Abstract

This paper discussed the proverb- cleanliness is next to godliness as it could be applied to the extraordinary ministers of Holy communion in the Catholic Church. This group is responsible for the distribution of Holy Communion and visiting the sick with Holy Communion, with the approval of the local ordinary in their respective parishes in a given Diocese. They function only when priests and deacons are lacking. Attention was paid in this paper to the fact that these ministers must be attractive in appearance and go for regular Confessions. Integrity and uprightness must be their watch word and they must refrain from satanic worship among others. It was then suggested that reputable people are to be considered for this ministry, regular training should be organized for them and they must be well remunerated. For the purpose of this study, the phenomenological method of inquiry was employed.

Keywords: Extraordinary ministers, Holy Communion, Cleanliness, Godliness, local ordinary and Parish priest.

introduction

This topic- cleanliness is next to godliness which is also called phrase or proverb by some scholars, is familiar at least to those of us who attended various Novitiates in Religious Congregations. It was frequently used by Novice mistresses to emphasize the importance of keeping our environment neat for the purpose of inviting God to dwell with us in our beautiful atmosphere. It also applies to the fact that we have an ethical duty to keep ourselves clean. Cleanliness is used in all faiths and cultures, religious doctrines include various rules that instruct the proper actions of its devotees. For instance, Preston and Ryan (2012) state that in "Judaism, a woman is considered impure for one week after menstruation, and anyone who touches her is also impure until nightfall. Islamic toilet

etiquette requires that one cleanse with water after defecation, and cannot use one's right hand to do so." Therefore, this proverb is not strange to religion.

Olawale (2018) traced the origin of this proverb, and discovered that it was old and very common in Babylonian and Hebrew religious pamphlets. This proverb found its way to English literature in a modified version through the writings of Sir Francis Bacon, a philosopher and a scientist in 1605. However, it was first used in religious sermons in 1778 by John Wesley. Till today, we are using it to state the relationship between our physical appearance, spiritual purity and God.

He went further to define cleanliness as "a quality or state of being clean and also the habit of achieving and maintaining a clean state. Cleanliness can be seen as a moral quality of being clean and free from dirt. On a more practical level, cleanliness is attributed to a hygienic state and the prevention of diseases." p.1. "Habitually kept clean" (Merriam- Webster's Dictionary). Atkinson (2002) describes hygiene and habitually kept clean as washing of hair, creaming of hands and dressing up in neat clothes. This is relevant to what we were taught in our home training and elementary schools. It is actually more than this as it involves washing our body, clothes and making our environments clean.

In defining being godly or Godliness, the idea of remaining pious comes to mind quickly, this is in relation to keeping our vows as religious, attending Masses, reading the Bible regularly and keeping the commandments among others. In living godly lives, the bible in Gen 5: 21-24, wants us to walk with God and to please God as we have it in Gen 11. Godliness is about being devoted to the one true God. This is love in action or devotion in practice. Therefore, as earlier said, our physical appearance, spiritual purity and true devotion will then be translated into action and as I feel, the Ten Commandments must reflect in our lives as we have it in Exod 20: 2-17.

In the New Testament, St Paul describes his responsibility as an Apostle of God in relation to godliness. "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of the elect of God and the acknowledging of the truth, which is according to godliness:" (Titus 1:1). In another development, he proclaims "In all things show yourself an example of good works, in doctrine, in integrity, in gravity, the sound word that cannot be blamed: that he who is on the contrary part may be afraid, having no evil to say of us." (Titus 2:7-8) Also, "for the grace of God our Saviour has appeared to all men: Instructing us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly and justly and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus 2: 11-13).

“Seeing then that all these things are to be dissolved, what manner of people ought you to be in holy conversation and godliness? ...Wherefore, dearly beloved, waiting for these things, be diligent that you may be found before him unspotted and blameless in peace.” (1 Cor 3:10-12). These two terms can then be summarized as being clean in body and soul.

Relationship between Cleanliness and Godliness

We must draw the lines between these two terms before appraising their relevance to us as Ministers of Holy communion. McKenzie (1998) states that “it is clear that cleanness means fitness for participation in the cult, and that uncleanness disqualifies one from cultic functions” p.142. It is a pity that this scholar did not discuss how to determine cleanness or uncleanness. Whatever our society or environment abhors should be adopted as unclean. This will enable our people to respond to us and belief in us.

Preston and Ryan (2012) identified the followings as the relationship between these two words:

1. In discussing the relationship between religiousness and cleanliness, each may activate the other as goals for personal purity.
2. Religious doctrines not only prescribe cleaning behaviors that foster physical hygiene, but the act of religious devotion is itself represented as a motivation for spiritual purity.
3. Religious purity rituals are often cited to support the case for the embodiment of morality.
4. Washing and personal cleanliness are integral to many religious rituals, to prepare for contact with the sacred and maintaining the purity of sacred objects.

However, the following bible passages will be of help in identifying the relationship between the two terms.

1. “Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.” 2 Corinthians 7:1
2. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Matthew 5:8
3. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9
4. “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds before my eyes; cease to do evil” Isaiah 1:16
5. “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10. This is very fundamental to our spiritual growth and to actively participate

in the distribution of the body of Christ. Finley (1997) carefully defines sin as “any action that hurts you, your relationship with other people or the earth. To do any of these things is to damage your relationship with your creator as well” p.110.

Application to extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion in the Catholic Church

Canon 910, paragraph 2 of the code of canon law is explicit on who can be the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion in the Catholic Church. “The extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion is an acolyte, or another of Christ faithful deputed in accordance with canon 230, paragraph 3” p.167.

In an elaborate version, Canon law permits that where the needs of the Church require and ministers are not available, among the lay faithful, even though they are not lectors or acolytes, reputable people could be chosen to exercise the ministry of the word, preside over liturgical prayers, confer baptism and distribute Holy Communion, in accordance with the provisions of the law. (Cf. C. 230 §1-3, Redemption is Sacramentum) (N.B: The term "lay people" does not distinguish between men and women).

The extraordinary minister of Holy Communion can administer Communion only when the priest and deacon are lacking, when the priest is prevented by weakness or advanced age or some other genuine reason, or when the number of faithful coming to Communion is so great that the very celebration of Mass would be unduly prolonged. (A brief prolongation, considering the circumstances and culture of the place, is not at all a sufficient reason). And this is done after the prescribed rites have taken place and with the consent of the ordinary of the place.

Since extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion is responsible for distribution of Holy Communion, helping the parish priest in doing communion service and taking communion to the sick, then, how can this topic/phrase or proverb relevant in this ministry?

1. Appearances must be attractive.
2. Confessions must be regular.
3. Integrity and uprightness must be a watch word.
4. Renouncement of ungodly and worldly desires.
5. Above all, refrain from satanic worship.

Also, remember to keep sacred linens neat since they have direct contact with the Holy Communion.

Suggestions

In line with the above discussions, the following suggestions are offered:

1. That an extraordinary minister must be a man or woman of repute. The world is full of scandals, only those who are making extra efforts to live well should be allowed to belong to this category in the Church. This will enhance the faith of the people and encourage more converts. Hence, emphasis should be laid on the fact that they must be clean and strive to be like God.
2. There should be regular training and re-training for all members to improve their confidence and to also give them a sense of belonging.
3. Parish Priests should be allowed to choose members from their churches to become extraordinary members of Holy Communion, with the approval of the Bishop. This is far better than centralizing the distribution of members to parishes.
4. The parish they are serving should pay attention to their just remuneration.

Conclusion

We have presented the relationship between cleanliness and Godliness in such a way that each may motivate the other as goals for personal pureness. "We need to be clean from Mind, Body, and Soul to make this world a Better place for us and future generations." Khanna (2020). Permit me to conclude with the words of St Paul in 1 Cor 10:31. "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God." It is pertinent to keep in mind that you are what you do. By implication, if you partake in the bringing Christ to people, you are not far from becoming a channel that leads others to Christ.

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