

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 3-15-2021



Dear Friends in Christ,

ONE AT ONE – Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, March 16 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week let our prayers be for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who have been subjected to attacks and bullying because of false claims that Asian people are to blame for the pandemic. Pray for descent treatment for all people and the end of racism. Pray for healing for those who have experienced racist treatment and bullying.

There is a wonderful passage in the novel *The Life of Pi* by Yann Martel where the main character, Piscine, becomes interested in other religions. He is a Hindu from birth but begins to learn about Christianity from a Roman Catholic priest. At first Pi is puzzled by some of the beliefs Christians have about God and wonders about them in light of his Hindu beliefs. And it is a marvelous description of a God who becomes one of us and of the foolishness of the cross.

That God could put up with adversity, I could understand. The gods of Hinduism face their fair share of thieves, bullies, kidnapers, and usurpers. What is *Ramayana* but the account of one long, bad day for Rama? Adversity, yes. Reversals of fortune, yes. Treachery, yes. But humiliation? Death? I couldn't imagine Lord Krishna consenting to be stripped naked, whipped, mocked, dragged through the streets and, to top it off, crucified—and at the hands of mere humans, to boot. I'd never heard of a Hindu god dying. Brahman Revealed did not go for death. Devils and monsters did, as did mortals, by the thousands and millions—

that's what they were there for. Matter, too, fell away. But divinity should not be blighted by death. It's wrong. The world soul cannot die, even in one contained part of it. It was wrong of this Christian God to let His avatar die. For if the Son is to die, it cannot be fake. If God on the Cross is God shamming a human tragedy, it turns the Passion of Christ into the Farce of Christ. The death of the Son must be real. Father Martin assured me that it was. But once a dead God, always a dead God, even resurrected. The Son must have the taste of death forever in His mouth. The Trinity must be tainted by it; there must be a certain stench at the right hand of God the Father. The horror must be real. Why would God wish that upon Himself? Why not leave death to the mortals? Why make dirty what is beautiful, spoil what is perfect?

Love. That was Father Martin's answer.

This Son, on the other hand, who goes hungry, who suffers from thirst, who gets tired, who is sad, who is anxious, who is heckled and harassed, who has to put up with followers who don't get it and opponents who don't respect Him—what kind of god is that? It's a god on too human a scale, that's what. There are miracles, yes, mostly of a medical nature, a few to satisfy hungry stomachs; at best a storm is tempered, water is firefly walked upon. If that is magic, it is minor magic, on the order of card tricks. Any Hindu god can do a hundred times better. This Son is a god who spent most of His time telling stories, talking. This Son is a god who walked, a pedestrian god—and in a hot place at that—with a stride like any human stride, the sandal reaching just above the rocks along the way; and when He splurged on transportation, it was a regular donkey. This Son is a god who died in three hours, with moans, gasps, and laments. What kind of a god is that? What is there to inspire in this Son?

Love, said Father Martin.

And this Son appears only once, long ago, far away? Among an obscure tribe in a backwater of West Asia on the confines of a long-vanished empire? Is done away with before He has a single grey hair on His head? Leaves not a single descendant, only scattered, partial testimony, His complete works doodles in the dirt? Wait a minute. This is more than Brahman with a serious case of stage fright. This is Brahman selfish. This is Brahman ungenerous and unfair. This is Brahman practically unmanifest. If Brahman is to have only one son, He must be as abundant as Krishna with the milkmaids, no? What could justify such stinginess?

Love, repeated Father Martin.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey