

DEO ET PATRIAE  
2015

The no longer much-esteemed English poet Robert Bridges,  
who though an Anglican possessed a strong agnostic streak,  
asked in 1879, in a letter to an old friend since Oxford days,  
the incomparably greater poet,  
Father Gerard Manley Hopkins of the Society of Jesus,  
how he might learn to believe.

In his answering letter, Father Hopkins told him:

"GIVE ALMS"

If we banished children of Eve were to discover that our valley of tears had been transformed into a realm of perfect justice ...

- where everyone rendered each, precisely what was his due, and everyone received exactly what was rightly his -

(an event, by the way, not merely highly improbable but actually impossible)

... a world that was perfectly just BUT NOTHING MORE, with nothing that transcended justice,

we would discover soon enough that we were dwelling in a world that was scarcely human.

In saying which I have no intention of being paradoxical or quirky or novel. Rather, I am recalling something that I am sure we all already know.

If we had no scope for being more than just,  
if everything were always and exactly even-Steved,  
why, we couldn't so much as say "thank you"  
to Constantinos or Milton for bringing us  
our morning coffee in the Amity.

What I am doing is simply looking at the  
two sides of the coin of "giving alms" -  
generosity and gratitude -

which after all are why we are here to-night.

The reason why I said, a moment ago, that a perfectly just society is in any case an impossibility, however much we might strive to render each other his due, is also something which (I believe) we already know: we have all incurred debts — incountably many debts — that just cannot be repaid.

In Saint Thomas' examination in the Summa of this topic, he mentions first of all, God.

(Imagine standing before the Throne of God and announcing: "O.K. We're all even now, you and I.")

and surveys, under the heading "Religion", the varied ways by which humans render service and worship to God.

Next, Thomas turns to those unrequitable debts that we owe to our parents and kinfolk as well as to our patria (these last being quite apropos to-night in the light of the very name of our festivities). All of our acts of respect and obedience and deference ~~and~~ in this regard he subsumes under the virtue of pietas, or piety.

The last virtue that Thomas appends to justice is obsequantia - reverence and honor in word and deed - rendered in the light of our moral debts to people holding some office of responsibility (of governance or of counsel or of instruction or of any of the many forms that benevolence may take).

So, tonight is a night of unpayable debts and diffuse gratitude.

This lovely reception and celebration is an act of observantia by which Regis recognizes and honors her supporters at the "Order of the Owl" - level. But I am sure that we all understand that tonight's participants have been invited as representatives (chosen not entirely arbitrarily, of course) of all Regis' generous sons. Our Lord's ~~parable~~<sup>teaching</sup> of the Widow's Mite - if you don't mind my putting in my two cents - is enough warrant for that.

It also gives the right color to my otherwise insufferably cheeky reminder of the observantia that students owe to their schoolmasters. I also have been invited tonight as a not-entirely-arbitrarily chosen representative, -

representative of a long and splendid array

of other men and women,

a few of whom were once my students,  
some of whom were my own distinguished teachers,

many of whom were my honored colleagues,

a tiny handful of whom were both of the latter

(what an honor that ~~best~~ was!)

In that spirit, and under that formality,

I am delighted to accept the 2015 Deo et

Patriae Award.

As a closing coda I want to recall what perhaps only the True Anciently among us have a living memory of : the days when the Church regularly celebrated Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

The second verse of the opening hymn went

Uni trinoque Domino  
Sit sempiterna gloria  
Qui vitam sine termino  
Nobis donet in patria

} in Italics

which, Englished, says

Eternal glory be to our Triune Lord  
who will give us Life Unending in our Fatherland

My hope is that all of us banished children of Eve will, after this our exile, receive God's gracious gift of entry into our real patria.

With a grateful heart, I thank you all.