

(PRACTICING) CATHOLIC

September 29, 2024

(PRACTICING) CATHOLIC - RECOGNIZE GOD IN YOUR ORDINARY MOMENTS

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The Angel in the Marble

If you show up to the gates of heaven completely whole, I kind of doubt you'll be let inside.

I know that sounds pretty awful, because what kind of God doesn't want all of you, exactly as you are? "Be yourself," we tell our kids. "If someone expects you to change to be their friend, you don't want to be that person's friend."

And sure, all of that is true ... to an extent. But I think if we really analyze our closest friendships, we'll see that we *have* been changed by them. We aren't the same person we were on the day we met our best friend or before we fell in love with our spouse. The good relationships should always change us, form us. They should call us to some higher plateau on the mountain climb that is life. But to be nimble enough for the climb, there will be parts of ourselves that we have to jettison — preconceived notions, prejudices, selfish tendencies, habits that we cling to like a security blanket.

This is how we become who we are meant to be: by discerning what isn't helpful and good in our own nature, and letting it go.

"I saw the angel in the marble," Michelangelo once said of his artistic process, "and I carved until I set him free."

Would it not be a terrible tragedy if we all remained shapeless hunks of marble, untouched by the chisels of experience and relationship, thinking ourselves perfect exactly as we are?

God looks at us and he sees the angel hidden in the marble, imprisoned there by the constraints of earthly life: original sin, the weakness of our flesh, the unceasing enticement of the evil one. He sees past what we need to excise, what we need to lop off, what we need to relinquish. He knows we are greatly attached to every part of ourselves, even those parts that lead us to sin.

He sees more than what is. He sees what can be.

"Cleanse me from my unknown faults!" — Psalm 19:13