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Good Friday and Easter Sunday are one

Michael Leach | Mar. 27, 2012 Soul Seeing

When I was in the seminary, an elderly priest told us, ?Life is a series of Good Fridays with an occasional Easter thrown in just to keep us going.?

We were young. ?No!? we objected. ?Life is an endless Easter with some Good Fridays thrown in to keep us on our toes!?

It wasn?t until I was his age that I realized both sides are true.

When Vickie and I first met 42 years ago, I asked her, ?What is your philosophy of life??

She said without hesitation, ?Life is for shit.?

?How can you say that?? I said. ?You?re a happy, cheerful person.?

?You see my eye,? she said. Her right eye was scarred and cloudy, the color of a seashell. When she was 15 months old Vickie fell on a glass Easter rabbit and was blinded. ?When I was a little girl I walked with my face down so people wouldn?t see how ugly I was. Sometimes people, even strangers, asked me embarrassing questions or made hurtful remarks. When the kids played games I was always the monster. I grew up imagining that everyone looked at me with disdain, as if the way I looked was my fault. I was a freak. Life was for shit. Thank God there was a heaven at the end.?

I told her the truth: She was beautiful, in every way.

She knew I meant it. ?What is your philosophy of life?? she asked.

?That heaven begins right here. We couldn?t be further apart. Yet I walk around with sadness in my heart. And you walk around glowing. What gives??

She was Good Friday with Easter in her heart. I was Easter with Good Friday on my back.

One year later we were married.

Forty-two years later, Vickie still believes that life is for shit but she also knows that heaven does begin right here. I still believe that heaven begins right here but have also come to accept that life is for shit. We laugh a lot.

We have come to know that Easter and Good Friday are one.

?In this world you shall have tribulations,? Jesus said, ?but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world? (John 16:33).

Isn?t that what Good Friday and Easter are all about?

Good Friday means you can nail beauty to a cross but you can?t destroy it. Easter means you can bury love in a cave but it won?t stay there. We begin to die the moment we?re born but Jesus gives us new life the moment he dies. Jesus was our savior and the greatest teacher who ever lived. How wonderful to know that that he rose from the dead, as he promised, to demonstrate that everything he taught about being loving and at peace was true.

?He departed from our sight,? wrote St. Augustine, ?so we might return to our heart and there find him. For he departed, and behold, he is here.? Like E.T. who famously said, ?I?ll be right here,? only for real!

Without Good Friday there can be no Easter. They are two sides of the same lost and found coin. The old priest was right. The young seminarians were, too. Vickie and I taught each other one truth. We all forget Good Friday when love dissolves our pain. We each experience Easter when we fall and rise again, when we sin and discover, perhaps for the first time, that to God ?our scarlet sins are whiter than snow? (Psalm 51:6), and every time a leaf blows by and we know that a new one is being born again.

Life is often cruel, but our Easter moments are more powerful than all the Good Fridays put together. Good Friday spurs us to behold what the poet Francis Thompson saw as ?all the sweetness in the sad, the sadness in the sweet.? Easter brings to mind the sweet lament of Cyrano de Bergerac: ?There comes a moment, once -- and God help those who pass that moment by! -- when beauty stands looking into the soul with grave, sweet eyes that sicken at pretty words.?

That moment is now. ?Be still and know that I am God? (Psalm 46:10).

[Michael Leach is the author of *Why Stay Catholic? Unexpected Answers to a Life-Changing Question*.]

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