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The pure, peaceable, impartial Christianity of Christ

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NCR Today

Re-reading Frederick Douglass' narrative I came across a stirring confession that resonated deeply with Anne Rice grappling with Christianity she is most recently known for,

I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ: I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land.

Rice's denouncement of Catholicism is one that stirs in the hearts of so many Catholics who desire to be the "pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ" for others and are frequently misrepresented by what Rice calls an "anti-gay, anti-feminist, anti-life" faith.

Valerie Elverton Dixon, writer for the Washington Post, writes an open letter to Anne Rice on her pained decision to leave the church. Dixon's letter asks Rice to consider the other members of the Christian faith who similarly toil with the misrepresentation and seek "to be better witnesses for incarnate Love today than we were yesterday."

Amidst media turmoil, and a steady inundation of nauseating deeds committed by "leaders" of our church, Dixon's letter offers much needed perspective for discouraged Catholics. She beckons readers to recall those groups of radical Catholics whom we can take pride in. We all know them. They are those tenacious women of the LCWR, those humble Catholic Worker volunteers, leaders like Bishop Kevin Dowling, and little girls who proudly altar serve under the furrowed, disapproving brows of men decades older. The Dorothy Day's, Catherine of Siena's, and Bishop Oscar Romero's are very much present today, and their efforts are not in vain.

I'm reminded of words from John Steinbeck's "East of Eden",

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?We have only one story. All novels, all poetry are built on the never-ending contest in ourselves of good and evil. And it occurs to me that evil must constantly respawn, while good, while virtue, is immortal. Vice has always a fresh young face, while virtue is venerable as nothing else in the world is.? I am certain that the beauty of the church can destroy the weakness of the church, we simply must not be discouraged by evolving and recurring corruption but stand secure in what is venerable.

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