

“Dionne – a reflection”

I have been mulling this over for some months now and it's been a bit like Gideon's dream - it would not go away.

When I was a boy, I went to a famous School in Shrewsbury, England. Every weekday there was “Chapel” and the best part of this was that we got to know, sing and love the great hymns of the Church of England. There was one hymn of such beautiful simplicity that I have never forgotten it. Originally a poem, it was written by George Herbert, a contemporary of Shakespeare, in the early seventeenth century. The first two verses daily resound in my mind 50 years later

Teach me, my God and King,  
in all things thee to see,  
and what I do in anything  
to do it as for thee.

A man that looks on glass,  
on it may stay his eye;  
or if he pleaseth, through it pass,  
and then the heaven espy.

Not long ago my wife and I called on a young mother in Section 8 housing; she was looking for some food & help with her utilities. As we walked up to the town house we remarked how attractive it was; inside however the picture was quite different. Two bright and energetic children were cartwheeling around on the family room carpet which was grossly stained, both the couch and armchair were destroyed and had collapsed to the point that they could not be used. As I walked through this battlefield to the kitchen the sour smell that permeated the apartment grew even more rank. Every surface in the kitchen was piled high with dirty pots, pans dishes and empty pizza boxes. Gingerly I set the bag of food down on the countertop, scooting aside a dirty plate from which a swarm of fruit flies rose....

Back in the family room we started to chat. Dionne was an energetic and collected young mother who freely admitted that as a teenager she had made some seriously bad choices that had led to her being convicted, which was why she was finding moving closer to the Community College where she was planning to study catering, was proving so difficult. Landlords had a hard time looking beyond her record. Looking at her record with SVdP I could see she was not a frequent flier with us. “What do you plan to do when you graduate?” I asked “I'm going to open my own restaurant and call it Dionne's kitchen” she replied. “Just you wait and see, someday you'll have to stand in line to eat at Dionne's. It's gonna be 50's diner style and outside there'll be a great big pink neon sign with my name on it”.

“I look forward to standing in line to eat at Dionne's” I said. “If you call me before, I'll get you in the back and you can come and have a meal on me” she countered.

The more we talked the brighter and more real her dream became and then I realized that as we had been talking the initially overpowering squalor of this home had faded into the background and once more, I remembered the lines “a man that looks on glass, on it may stay his eye or if he pleaseth through it pass and then the heaven espy.” As we came in, I had “stayed my eye” on its squalor and sour smell; only when we began to talk to Dionne did my eyes pass through the glass and see this Child of God who had a dream that shone so brightly that she could make a perfect stranger like me see it too. Yet again my God and King was teaching me to see Him in all things.....