

Reflection for the 22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Recently, I had the pleasure to read an article about G.K. Chesterton by John Janaro. This article reminded me, of the British author who is so often referred to as an English writer, philosopher, lay theologian, and literary and art critic. Gilbert Keith Chesterton was born on May 29, 1874 in Kensington, England and passed away on June 14, 1936 at the age of 62 in Buckinghamshire, England. He was laid to rest in the Roman Catholic Cemetery in Beaconsfield, England. It was in the year 1922 that G.K. Chesterton left the Anglican Church and joined the Roman Catholic Church, his wife Frances who had married him in 1901 and helped him to embrace the Trinity and teaching on Incarnation, followed him into the Catholic Church in 1926.

Many would say that Chesterton's embrace of the Catholic faith greatly deepened his perceptive power and his universal scope of understanding. He wrote some of his greatest works in the final 14 years of his life including; *The Everlasting Man*, *Thomas Aquinas*, *Francis of Assisi*. G.K. was a life-long learner and seeker; he was constantly striving to grow in wisdom and understanding. He clearly had a big impact on the people of his day and in the last few decades there has been a renewed interest in his writings and his wit. We can see the growing interest in G. K. Chesterton from Dale Ahlquist founding the American Chesterton Society in 1996 to in the fall on 2014 the G. K. Chesterton Academy of Chicago opening its doors.

G.K. Chesterton is credited with developing the principle called "*Chesterton's fence*" which states that reforms should not be made until the reasoning behind the existing state of affairs is understood. Chesterton was a large man standing 6'4" tall and weighing 286 pounds, his girth gave rise to an anecdote during WWI, when a lady in London asked him why he was not "out at the Front." With his character wit, Chesterton responded "*if you go round to the side, you will see that I am.*" Over the years there have been concerns of how Chesterton presented Jews in his fictional works as greedy, cowardly, and disloyal. In the end we can be inspired by the wit and wisdom of G.K. Chesterton, but he was a product of his age and time.

What you and I can take from the life and works of G.K. Chesterton is a man that was always willing to learn and wished to see society and the world become a better place. Chesterton knew that for the world to become a better place we need to know our history so that we can move forward trusting in the one true God. We need a starting point as we head out into the unknown, and we need an anchor to help us stay rooted and grounded.

In our Gospel reading this Sunday we hear of Jesus challenging St. Peter when Peter is not open to the possibility of Jesus' death and resurrection. In Jesus' sharp words to Peter, our Lord is challenging Peter and all of us to be able to see beyond the here and now. Christ invites all of us be able to see that good things can come from challenging moments. For many of us the greatest lessons we learn are not from our success but from our failure. It is from taking a moment to regroup, ponder, and pray that we can learn great lessons when we fail. So often in failure there can be a greater openness to help from others and openness to new ways of doing things.

As Catholics we have a great history to draw from, be it the traditions of our faith or the Saints that have followed Christ in this world and in the next. We have great authors and thinkers from 2,000 years of faith that can and should inspire us and help us move forward as individuals and as a faith community. St. Peter, G.K. Chesterton and others through their strengths and weaknesses can help us embrace a path forward in this world as a Church and as a community striving to help the world become a better place while looking forward to the Heavenly Kingdom.