

August 14, 2020

Okay, I have to admit it.

I listened to the podcast today and almost turned it off after a few minutes. I spent the first ten minutes rolling my eyes, getting annoyed, and trying to convince myself that I didn't need to listen to the whole podcast.

It seems to me that God often happens when I'm convinced that there is nothing of importance happening.

The podcast exposed me to a conversation that I haven't had before. There were many helpful parts to it and probably many parts that I will continue to cause me to roll my eyes. It was a reminder to me that we are called as Christians to a common table – to respect and love one another – and perhaps learn to agree and disagree with one another but remain at the same table. I encourage you to listen to this podcast, it is worth it. I will have a few comments about the podcast tomorrow.

I wanted to use the remainder of this blog entry to respond to something that was said at the very beginning of the podcast. One thing that the Teddy Reeves does as a museum curator is to catalog Funeral Service Leaflets. He said that these leaflets present a biography of the men and women who were the foundations of local places of worship who could easily be forgotten by the generations to come. The service leaflets offer us a biography of people and their lives that we might not otherwise know. I am constantly amazed by the things the people of Saint Barnabas have done in their lives. So often, people arrive in Fredericksburg after retiring and we don't know the story of the first half of their lives. It is fascinating and fun to learn about the places you have gone and done during your lifetimes. I am constantly surprised to hear the stories being told at funeral receptions. I have the service leaflet from every funeral at which I have officiated. I keep them to be reminded of the incredible people who have walked this journey with me.

I find a tremendous amount of peace at cemeteries and columbariums imagining the great cloud of witnesses that have come before me. This is probably one of the reasons that I am fascinated by "Findagrave.com". On this website, you can find the grave markings in cemeteries and columbariums throughout the world. Saint Barnabas's columbarium is here: <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/1991033/saint-barnabas-episcopal-columbarium>. By way of the computer, you can visit the gravesites of family and friends without leaving your home. I was reading about someone who was recently buried at the cemetery in Sewanee, TN. I was able to go to the website and find the grave. This may not appeal to everyone. But, for some reason I found some peace looking at the grave and saying a simple prayer.

When I was in seminary in Tennessee, there were often funerals of friends that occurred back in my hometown of Corpus Christi. There was no way that I could return

for a funeral. So, I decided to go to the chapel or a quiet place at the time appointed for the funeral. I would then read the Burial Office to myself. It connected me a very real way to the service occurring thousands of miles away. I would encourage you to do the same thing in our world today. If there is a service for family only, read along with the Burial Office when the service is scheduled to start. If there is no service, pick a time to pray the burial office on your own and celebrate the life of your loved one. It is an incredibly intimate way in which to celebrate God's love of us all.