

June 23, 2019

1 Corinthians 13:11

Colossians 1:28

Love 301: God, Others, Yourself “Being Childish No Longer: Growing Up”

I have never met a person who has not been scarred by life. We all end up with wounds and disfigurements that we need to heal and repair to the best of our ability with the help of God. These things that happen to us need to be addressed, for if they remain unaltered we look and act childish and never seem to fully grow up.

Michelangelo and his three pietas (respectively in Rome, Florence and Milan) represent to me the struggle we all have in dealing with the hurts of our past.

Michelangelo’s mother died of a prolonged chronic illness when he was six years old. After which time he was sent to live with a nanny and her husband.

(Pieta in Rome)

The story of Michelangelo’s three pietas may be more autobiographical than some realize. In the pieta in Rome (the most famous one) Michelangelo was just 23 years old when he finished the cardinal commissioned work after five years.

In this pieta Mary (possibly representing his own mother) is detached and distant from her son. Not what we would expect – the mother clutching her son to her breast is absent. And so, it was for Michelangelo, a mother who was not there for him. Their relationship was ever distant.

(Pieta in Florence)

Even though Michelangelo had drawn hundreds of pietas

(Mary holding the dead body of Jesus) he only made three into sculptures and the second one he tried to destroy and then did not finish.

Could it have been that his second pieta, which was not commissioned, yet he worked on it for eight years, expecting it would go on his own tomb.

This pieta shows a more intimate and closer relationship between mother and son. There are two others there (Mary Magdalene and Nicodemus or possibly Joseph of Arimathea), both seeking to manage this most critical moment between them.

And yet, one night at age 72, Michelangelo goes into the studio and decimates the piece due to what he said was a flaw in the marble in Mary's arm. Could it be that his mother's arms were inadequate to hold him throughout his life. Was there unfinished business with his mother?

Let's not be shocked, is he not like us? Sometimes our behavior is self-destructive and has significant consequences for others and us.

When we have trauma we work through it in stages, and there are times in which our rage shows that we still have unfinished business.

(Rondanini Pieta)

And then, we have Michelangelo's Rondanini pieta in Milan. He was working on it just six days before he died at age 88. You will have to decide for yourself whether he came to be at peace regarding his mother or was there still work to be done that he left undone.

Paul in writing to the Corinthian Church about what love really looks like goes into a small discourse about what it means to be mature in your love and act grown up, and be not childish.

Paul says when he was a child; his speech, feelings and thinking were at times childish. Then, he goes on to say, now that he is an adult, he has no more use for childish ways. What would it be like, if we came to that same conclusion and commitment.

From the list about what love does and does not look like from 1 Corinthians 13 we can come up with two categories which should help us monitor ourselves and take care of unfinished business. They are our monitoring of “behaving badly” and “keeping score.”

We behave badly when we let our **emotions escalate**. Grown up seeks to express their emotions while at the same time keeping their emotions under control.

We also behave badly when we go about:

Blaming – when something goes wrong and the solution to the problem is not suggested, rather instead, people finger point as a way of saying whose fault it is.

Lying – is the childish thing we do when a situation becomes uncomfortable. Grown ups deal with reality.

Name-calling is childish. Grown ups seek to understand issues.

Impulsivity/poor impulse control is childish and can be seen and heard when we strike out, not thinking about the consequences. Adults pause, resisting the impulse to shout out hurtful words or do hurtful actions.

Needing to be the center of attention and responding by getting fussy and agitated when you are not is childish. Adults do not have the need or desire to be front and center all the time. They can let others be the focus of attention.

Bullying is when we take advantage of an edge we have. And in the process pick on and ridicule others. Adults respect boundaries. Yours is yours and mine is mine.

Immature defenses – adults listen to others as well as themselves and in so doing engage in collaborative problem solving. Another way we act immature is when we can't admit we did what we did and said what we said.

And last, but by no means least is the childish behavior of a **non-observing ego** – which is having no ability to see, acknowledge or learn from your mistakes. Mature adults after they lose their cool, realize that their outburst was inappropriate and out of line with their value system. Those who are not able to do this, see their anger as normal. They excuse and justify their childish behavior by blaming the other person. In other words, "I only did it because you made me."

Though many of us have seen pictures of an eagle's nest high in the branches of a tree or in the crag of a cliff, few of us have gotten a glimpse inside. When a mother eagle builds her nest she starts with thorns, broken branches, sharp rocks, and a number of other items that seem entirely unsuitable for the project. But then she lines the nest with a thick padding of wool, feathers, and fur from animals she has killed, making it soft and comfortable for the eggs.

By the time the growing birds reach flying age, the comfort of the nest and the luxury of free meals make them quite

reluctant to leave. That's when the mother eagle begins "stirring up the nest." With her strong talons she begins pulling up the thick carpet of fur and feathers, bringing the sharp rocks and branches to the surface. As more of the bedding gets plucked up, the nest becomes more uncomfortable for the young eagles. Eventually, this and other urgings prompt the growing eagles to leave their once-comfortable abode and move on to more mature behavior.

Some of us have become comfortable in the nest we're in. Yet, leaving you there all settled in your ways, would not allow you to mature and go to higher heights.

So, I have dared to stir the nest, pluck up and throw out the soft and fluffy stuff, and instead I have caused you to encounter thorns, broken branches, and sharp rocks.

And this has been for one purpose and one alone, so that we may all move toward greater maturity in Christ and into a love that is consistently patient, kind, thoughtful, humble, not jealous, not rude, nor selfish, that does not keep score, is not pleased with evil doing – others or our own, and who find great happiness in the truth.