

Eulogy for Doug from Durwood Foster

When Doug first came to PSR as a student, there was a momentary scare whether he would fit here.

After my opening theology class, he came forward with a worried look. The initial assignment, due next session, was a brief paper on "How my thinking about God has changed since entering college."

Doug had been at Duke, where he impressed and learned from Visiting Professor Michael Polanyi. One of the things Doug learned, he said, was that God cannot be talked "about." God can only be addressed as Personal Thou. Regarding the paper due next time, I had told the class to try being objective, but that was just what Doug felt he could never be. Well, I looked into that face, those unforgettable eyes, and sensed the possibility of the student who will teach you more than you will ever need teach her or him. I said to Doug: St. Augustine and St. Anselm, two Christian thinkers second to none, did some of their best theology as personal address to God. By all means, do as YOU must.

Decades came and went, and Doug's profound astuteness in theology--not to mention other things--blessed the school and the planet in manifold ways.

A few months ago, when it was agonizingly clear our friend was in the throes of death, I again invited him to make a formal theological statement, should he be inclined. He was very glad to, just after his wake.

Forty-three years after Doug the entering junior, it was poignantly *deja vu*, because he spoke in the first instance very personally to God, but it also now mirrored Doug the unceasingly active servant and witness, as follows:

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU. That is the heart of Christian worship. Eucharist. I believe far too little thanks is expressed in our culture, in our seminaries, in our worship. SO THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

In setting up the Center for the Arts, Religion, and Education (CARE) that has been one of my main motives: to give thanks to those to whom thanks is due (when many faculty and clergy and others have given lifetimes in fine teaching and scholarship and service and have been remembered in no way by those schools or congregations which they served.) I talked with each person about how he or she would most passionately like to see themselves remembered and for what purposes, and so we crafted these 50 endowment funds.

REMEMBER AND GIVE THANKS FOR ALL GOD HAS DONE AND IS DOING AND WILL DO THROUGH THESE MANY WONDERFUL PERSONS AS THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THROUGH OTHER EXPRESSIONS OF GOD ALSO. Amen.

Also I often pray "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon me a sinner."

I believe that we are saved by grace through faithfulness. But it is God's grace and Jesus Christ's faithfulness.

I am faithless much of the time; so I thank God and Christ and the Holy Spirit that I am saved by them and am welcomed into their company through communion which makes me a part of the body and blood of Christ.

How I close my best piece of scholarship, the chapter on Rembrandt's Prodigal Son (in the book "Reluctant Partners: Art and Religion in Dialogue," edited by Ena Heller) is how I close my theology: God forgives us no matter what we have done, God forgives no matter what we are doing, God forgives us no matter what we will do. Thanks be to God. Amen. – Doug Adams

In theology his interests often reminded us of Polanyi, and Buber, or Tillich. But Doug's last testament puts me especially in mind of John Wesley: who saw the utmost of Christian perfection, not in moralism, but in joyous affirmation despite humongous suffering; and also, rather surprisingly, in mind of Karl Barth, whose Christian ethic summons us supremely to festivity, to jubilant thanksgiving for the triumph of a universal grace. The saints go marching in,

and in Doug Adams we salute one whose advent above is bound to make things merrier even there, as was always so for us here below. Amen.

-- Durwood Foster