

## DIVINITY AND HUMANITY

“Hey, Father, Rabbi, what are you two doing sitting here all by yourself?”

Turning, Father Bob spots Mickey Davidson behind him. “Oh, hi, Mickey ... how have you been,” he says, standing and extending his hand.

“Good, Father. Things are okay ... despite the economy. ... just wanted to come out, have a drink, and listen to the music. “So, what’s up?”

“A little celebration. It’s Mike Daniels birthday. Care to join us for a drink?”

“Thanks ... that’s nice of you. Next round’s on me.”

“You and Bob going to get into a sparring match tonight my friend?” Rabbi Josh asks, chuckling softly.

“No, no great debate tonight,” Mickey says, a quiet look of sadness in his eyes.

“Oh, come on Mickey. Heaven forbid we disturb the cosmic balance.”

Mickey pauses, drumming his fingers on the table. “Well, now you mention it, there is something sticking in my craw.”

Looking at Father Bob, Josh subtly rolls his eyes, a silent “here we go, again” look on his face.

“And what would that be my friend?” the priest asks.

“Well, I was wondering ...”

Wondering what,” Josh asks as Mickey pauses for a moment.

Looking across the table at Josh, Mickey shakes his head.

“... why, it seems, is everything going to hell in a handbasket?”

**It's steak night at Mike's Place. It's also Reverend Daniel's birthday so a little celebration is in order. Mike ordered some top-grade prime rib for the occasion. Father Bob and Rabbi Josh are already here, and the other clergymen will be along soon. Should be fun.**

**Mickey Davidson just spied the two clergymen and stopped by to say hello. A local businessman, he owns a string of car dealerships. A bit of a contradiction, Mickey claims to be an atheist, yet is quite respectful of the clergymen, and a generous supporter of the Council of Churches' charitable efforts.**

**Mickey and Father Bob have had some interesting discussions over time. I think Father finds Mickey and his viewpoints enlightening from a "how the other side thinks" point of view. But, tonight, from the look in his eyes and the tone of his voice, something other than lofty matters of faith is bothering Mickey.**

**What do you say we listen in ...?**

**"Whoa, Mickey. ... slow your roll as the kids say. That's not quite what I expected," Josh chuckles. "I was thinking more like, did Moses really part the Red Sea?"**

**"No, nothing like that, Rabbi."**

**"So, Mickey, how do you mean ... hell in a handbasket?" Father Bob asks.**

**"Well, my secretary, Sarah - you know her, she's in your parish - anyway, she has an uncle named Willy. Well, had an uncle is more like it. He was her favorite growing up. You know, the crazy uncle every kid ought to have. Well, he was killed in that shooting in Middletown last Monday night."**

**"I'm sorry, Mickey" Josh says, quietly.**

**"Yes, Mickey, me too. Please express my condolences to Sarah," Father Bob adds.**

Sighing, Mickey sits back in his seat. "I've been telling myself it's being in the wrong place at the wrong time. You know, fate ... when it's your turn ..." Mickey says, his voice trailing off.

And, that's not working for you," the priest asks?

"No, but it's the best I can do. I just keep thinking there has to be something more. I'm curious, what do you guys think?"

A momentary silence ensues as neither Bob nor Josh respond. Then, setting his coffee cup down, the rabbi turns to Mickey.

"Ever heard the statement, 'All evil needs to flourish is for good men to do nothing'?"

"Sure, Rabbi, and I couldn't agree more. But what can good men do?"

"Mickey, is it what good men haven't done, or, maybe did, by allowing certain things to happen."

"I don't follow."

"Well, there are any number of things that have occurred over the last fifty years or so that have gradually brought us to where we are today. But there is one thought that continually keeps coming back to me."

"What's that Rabbi?"

"There was a man of Bob's church, \* a bishop as I recall. He had a radio program in the 50's called *"Life is Worth Living."*

An impish look lights up Mickey's eyes. "Didn't figure you for a Sunday morning mass groupie Rabbi," he chuckles.

Josh laughs. "Me either. But my mother enjoyed him. One Sunday both Mom and I were listening and I remember hearing him say, '*When man stops believing in Divinity, eventually he stops believing in humanity.*' To a nine-year-old Jewish boy, Mickey, it sounded like a profound statement."

"Sounds profound today," Mickey says, half to himself. "But are you saying that the failure of religion is at the root of what's going on?"

“No,” Father Bob says, “not religion. I think what Josh is getting at, is that society has gradually eliminated the idea that men have an interdependent relationship rooted in the concept that he is made in the image and likeness of his Creator. And that image and likeness creates a common dignity that must be held precious and protected.”

Listening intently, Mickey sips his drink, saying nothing.

“Ask yourself, how much dignity do you see in the world today?”

Mickey pauses, looking off in the distance. “Well, I wouldn’t say, none. What happened to Uncle Willy isn’t the norm. But I have to admit, things aren’t like they were when I was a boy.”

The conversation lapses. Catching the waitress’ eye, Mickey calls her over.

Jennifer, how about another round for the table, he says, a smile breaking out on his face. “On my tab, please.”

“Yes sir, she answers.

“Mickey, I don’t recall this kind of violence growing up as a boy, either,” Josh says. “And it wasn’t evident in my parents’ day either ... the thirties, and forties. Outside of organized crime or a criminal act like a bank robbery, this level of violence we’re seeing now didn’t exist in America back then.”

“So, what happened?”

“Well, consider this. America was established on a belief in, and a reliance on, a supreme being whose laws govern man’s conduct. The Declaration of Independence emphatically states that and the First Amendment supports that idea. Then, in 1962, prayer was eliminated from the schools. ‘God is Dead’ became a fashionable rallying cry for the self-indulgent and the disillusioned, and God was subtly, or not so subtly, thrown under the bus. Gradually, the pledge of allegiance in schools was also largely done away with. And in 1964, in Texas, the carnage began.”

“Mickey, what have we seen since then,” Father Bob asks? No fault divorce shatters families. Abortion, no matter how you spin it, destroys innocent and helpless lives - the child in the womb is not a person – it is

entitled to no protection. Prolific and indiscriminate promiscuity leaves countless children without the presence of a father in their life, especially young men. Add in euthanasia, assisted suicide, the death penalty, all seeing man as little more than an animal, his worth dependent on his bank account, and is it any wonder, we're on the path we're traveling today?"

Sipping his coffee, Bob fixes Mickey with a look. "Stalin and the Soviet Union eliminated God; Hitler hated religion. Lose God and is that where society ultimately goes?"

"And getting back to the good Bishop's statement," Josh says. "Society, now preaches that belief in God ends at the family's front door, something 'private,' not something society in general should have to be exposed to. As Bob said, society, once recognized an inherent dignity in man bestowed by a loving Creator," Josh adds. "Today, it gives that idea lip-service, if that."

"Man, himself, has all the answers, Mickey?" Father Bob asks, continuing his previous thought. The question is rhetorical; the subtle sarcasm in the priest's tone of voice is not.

"So, put prayer back in the schools and the problem disappears, Mickey asks?" skepticism in his eyes.

"I wish it were that simple," the priest says; "though it might be a start. Unfortunately, there's no magical cure. It took generations to get where we are today; it's going to take at least a generation to try and put the evil back in Pandora's box."

Josh sets down his glass. "Mankind has an inherent dignity devoid of a higher power? Mickey, do you really believe that?"

"Sadness again clouds Mickey's eyes. Setting down his drink, he looks across the table at the two clergymen and softly says ...

"I see your point."

***"When man stops believing in divinity, eventually he stops believing in humanity." What do you think?***

**Almost weekly do we not see the results of that attitude as demons fueling personal vendettas are exorcized with a rifle?**

**Or worse?**

**Where and when will it stop?**

**Given the moral climate of the world, sadly, right now, the end is nowhere in sight.**

**Thinkaboutit ... I'm Tony Baggz.**

\*Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

©2019TresAngeliPublishing, LLC