

A LENTEN REFLECTION (3/24/10)



Last night I attended a fascinating lecture by Josie Oppenheim, a psychoanalyst in New York City. Reinterpreting Freud, she says there are three human drives: containment, creativity and immortality. The drive to contain is synonymous to death drive. When we contain something, we neutralize it, kill it, prevent it from getting out of the circle we've drawn or the box we made.

I suppose we always need to be creative, to think outside the little boxes we made for ourselves. We can create even a new reality. As you reflect on God this Holy Week, remember that we can not contain Christ in the little box; he rose again and the box was emptied.

Oppenheim also avers there is a thin line between dreams and reality. In fact, dreams are as real as reality itself. This is also what the Bible says, "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen." (Hebrews 11). But if you can dream it, you can have it.

You can even change reality through dreaming. Oppenheim, a member of the Adler family of artists, says she encourages her patients to have fantasies. Visions and dreams are the language of the spirit. Well, if you don't dream in the first place, how can your dreams come true?

Freud's theory of human drives stem from his imaginary story of two sons who desired their mother sexually and so they killed their father. From this, came the theory "killing the father image" as a means to develop one's identity or fulfill one's self-actualization.. But they could not possess their mother for that would be a betrayal of their brotherly pact. So one had to elevate himself to the level of the gods---or when one becomes god, he can have everything. Isn't this a destructive drive as well?

The desire to be like god was the motivation for the Tower of Babel. The people wanted to build a tower that reaches to the heavens. Through their mono-language and efficient communication, they progressed to the point of *hubris*, pride. God checked out on them out and confused their language, hence the "babel of tongues." From this confusion, they scattered all over the earth with multi languages, cultures and nations.

As Christians of course, we understand reality in another sense. All men have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Sin separated us from the divine and from one another. We need a sinless One who can bridge the gap between the human and the Divine and atone for our sins to the maker of us all. Christ becomes both the Victim and the Priest---the sacrifice and the reconciler. Through Christ, we have full access to God and to be "like Jesus" in faith, hope and love. God and the Human are now together in an ongoing dance of life. There is no ruptured relationship---a new reality.

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