The Marist Way of Promoting Interreligious Dialogue – Part Two

As we have seen, the maximalist position tends toward violence and arrogance. On the other side of the coin, the minimalist position tends toward spiritual indifferentism. In other words, we are all saying the same thing. Our convictions and practices are of no consequence. This leads to the spiritual sin of sloth.[1] It also demeans the sacrifices of the martyrs who died defending the fundamental truths of Christianity. Furthermore, minimalism is intellectually dishonest because it avoids dealing with the unpleasant reality that Christianity has several fundamental disagreements with the world's great religions. By avoiding the unpleasantness of admitting, somebody has to be wrong; minimalism settles for everyone being right.[2]

What, then, is the way out of this dilemma? In the spirit of Mary, let's ponder a bit further the meaning of the appearance of the Magi at the crib of Jesus. Relying on Bishop Barron,[3] he identifies three insights that point to the direction our thinking should follow. First, he notes that the Magi are presented with the greatest respect. They come from another faith tradition other than the Jews. Still, there is no hint of violence or antagonism toward them. Secondly, they come to Christ freely. They are drawn to Christ and not coerced into doing so. And thirdly, they come bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Something about Jesus compels the Magi to leave their homeland, travel a great distance and pay him homage. The baptized are united to Christ, who makes up his body, the Church. This is how he presents himself to the world but now at a particular time and place in history, whenever and wherever his believers are found. We should never despair of how the beauty that is our life in Christ, when lived and explained well, can attract and compel (draw) those of the other world religions to recognize it is him whom they are seeking and that he is the fulfillment of their religious aspirations.

The gifts the world's great religions offer the Risen Christ are those truths and virtues held in common with Christianity. We must be humble and admit they may live them even better than we do. As Bishop Barron points out, these are the treasures the world's religions offer Christ. To call the other great religions evil is to disparage those very gifts that are the means they are to come to him. Those beliefs and virtues shared with Christianity are Christ's gifts to the world religions since all good things come from him.

All of the faiths of the world are destined to bring their treasures to Christ in whom they will be fulfilled. Yes, I am saying that all the world's religions are destined to find their home in Christianity, which is the definitive revelation of God. That is prefigured when the Magi kneel before the infant Jesus. That gesture points to the day when all the world's great religions will

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[1] Acedia, or spiritual sloth, goes so far as to refuse the joy that comes from God and to be repelled by divine goodness. (Catechism of the Catholic Church #2094)

[2] https://www.wordonfire.org/videos/sermons/more-on-christ-and-the-world-religions/?queryID=b59da96263563a41a8cbca20ad93c532.

humble themselves to serve their lord and savior and his purposes. They will do this not because they have to but because they want to.

The world's great religions have already set foot on the path that will lead them to that day. Fulton Sheen once said that no one ever comes to Christ and returns by the same path. The Magi returning home by a different route has set in motion the return of the world's great religions to him whom they seek though they know not this is so. The day will come when the world's great religions will find their destiny in him. Without shame or loss, but humbly and gladly, they will retrace the steps of the Magi and fulfill what Scripture says with them in mind, "that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:10-11)