

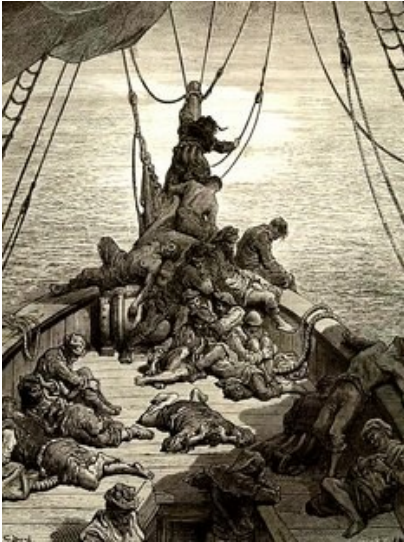


The Apostle

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DRIFTING



by Fr. Gregory

Merriam Webster Dictionary has this definition under "drift":

a: to move along a line of least resistance b: to move in a random or casual way c: to become carried along subject to no guidance or control

It seems to me that the word "drift" excellently characterises the spiritual state of contemporary western culture, particularly in Europe and especially in the UK. Whereas in former times a greater number of people might have lived by a political, philosophical or religious creed, today we simply have "drifters": people who will wander aimlessly or unguided through life, striking off here and there as social pressure and fancy take them.

It is this drift I believe that accounts for the low turnout at elections, not cynicism about politicians per se. It is drift that accounts for the mindless violence that afflicts alienated youth. It is drift that allows hedonism and consumerism to undermine family and community life. It is drift that anaesthetises people to life, death and the important questions that living and dying raise. Drifters only get energised and aggressive when they feel that their rudderless existence is being challenged, for the worst sin now is considered to be any infringement of privacy or moderation of personal autonomy. "It's my life, my prerogative ... back off!"

If one looks at the social history of humankind, "drift", manifesting itself as individualistic excess is always exceptional and atypical. When it does occur it always marks the descent of a culture and society into nihilism, corruption and death. More worryingly such a descent cannot easily be arrested. A dog returns to its own vomit. The devil ensures that disordered passions, once consented to, strengthen their grip on human life.

Sigmund Freud, who of course was no friend of religion didn't write mostly concerning sex as many suppose but rather, and

particularly in his later years, about "thanatos" (Greek: death), by which he took to mean a corrupting principle of death at work in human life. In this he couldn't have been more right, but being an atheistic Jew, he had no solution beyond self restraint and the due process of law. St. Paul had a solution however, born out of his own experience of contending with the adversary powers.

"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

[1 Corinthians 15:56]

This wonderful exclamation occurs in a chapter devoted to the transforming power of the resurrection of Christ. It is the answer both to *thanatos* and the drift into *thanatos*. It's what is missing from the mind and the heart of the heterodox post Christian west. It is precisely what the Orthodox Church both preaches and lives and yet it is an indictment of Orthodoxy in the west that we tend to keep this life to ourselves. We do not show people how to acquire this life. Many often do not even welcome people who are seeking this life.

This is monstrous and a judgement on our own lack of compassion that we are content to see so many drifting

towards the edge of the cliff and we do nothing because we are tempted simply to blame them for their own tragic situation. The danger of course is that if we persist in this inaction we ourselves will begin to drift for if we fail to respond to God's call to preach the gospel to all creation we shall be left with nothing to live by and for ourselves. We shall then have become the blind leading the blind, drifters amongst drifters. God forbid! Let us therefore open our eyes to the plight of our brethren and in compassion offer them Christ and the power of his resurrection. Let us ennoble our nation again by giving it back its rudder. Let us row vigorously toward the Kingdom rather than drift aimlessly towards destruction in a becalmed sea. In short let us be the Church again in this country.

LIFT UP YOUR VOICE

"Open thy mouth for the dumb, and for the causes of all the children that pass."

(Proverbs 31:8 DRB)



Part of the morning intercessory prayers for Orthodox Christians reads thus:

Save O Lord and have mercy on the aged and the young and even the unborn.

The unborn are yet in their mothers' womb. This should be a safe place for them except where a mother may slip and fall or have some other accident that could endanger the life of her unborn child. However, these are not the only dangers.

Alas, the child may come under attack from his or her own mother or father. One or the other of them, or both, may decide to abort the child for one or another reason and in this case, the child is defenceless against such intentions.

Today angry women say that the decision to abort ought to be solely their choice and nobody else's since their bodies produce the children. On the other hand, they would no doubt share the outrage that most people feel at so called "honour" killings, where parents murder a daughter because she is seen to have brought shame on the family by marrying outside their wishes or for talking to a boy or something of the sort.

However, whereas a teenage daughter may be lucky enough to escape and to alert the authorities who would not hesitate to come to her aid, and to prosecute the parents, the unborn infant has no such opportunity and is defenceless.

Yet the authorities fail to protect the unborn because they are unsure of what stage of development in the womb constitutes a person.

In the United States of America alone, 48 million children have already been aborted since 1973. The figures for England and Wales are equally astounding — 600,000 in the past three years. It is distressing to say the least.

Surely the voices of these children's blood are crying out to the Lord as the voices of the Holy Innocents slaughtered on their mothers' breasts by Herod in the days of Jesus or those murdered by Pharaoh of old in the days of Moses. We must stand up for what is right. Let us lift up our voices in the "causes of the children that pass."

Daniel Polson

PRAY FOR ...



Our Archbishop, Metropolitan John as he prepares for his enthronement in Paris at the Cathedral of St. Etienne (St. Stephen) on Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st September.
Many Years Master!