

Waking Up

'Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come...May He not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: "Watch"!'

We begin Advent 2017 with a disturbing wake-up call, assisted by the outing of men in entertainment (Louie C.K., Kevin Spacey, Jeffrey Tambor, Garrison Keillor), in politics (Ray Moore, Rep. John Conyers, Sen. Al Franken), and in journalism (Charlie Rose, Mat Lauer) who have abused power in dishonorable sexual acts against women (Spacey and Tambor excluded.) Republican or Democrat, morally conservative or libertine, professed Christians or not, these men are united only in their failure to grasp how women not only hate being groped, probed or exposed to vile expressions of their nakedness: they are being fractured by it.

We all are. I would go so far to say that the gender and sexual mess we are in-- 'gay' marriage and an ever growing list of gender 'selves--is founded on the fault-line of male privilege and the reverberating impact of previously unseen sexual power plays. Disintegrated masculinity damages all persons and in my opinion has successfully tempted a generation into concluding that 'gender' is a social construct employed by men to get what they want. I applaud the courageous women who have sounded this alarm.

My main point here is to raise some awareness of what might tempt otherwise smart, empathic men to treat women so badly. These are not excuses, but factors. A man possesses a kind of focused sexual energy that he must learn to temper into something that will serve the good of the other; he needs his sexuality to be integrated into the whole of his humanity, which includes his longing to be a trustworthy gift to her. Disintegration occurs when his sexuality splits off from his capacity to recognize the whole of another—a woman, a person, whom he has no right to employ as an object of his drive for pleasure or power. An integrated man subordinates his need for hers. Period.

Welcome to the mess we are in. Today we are witnessing masculine disintegration at a grand scale. We must wake up! And we must ask ourselves as a culture: are we sounding the clarion call of repentance unto integration for all men, as well as the training and formation that helps men become whole in relation to women? We perish without vision here, poisoned by grotesque images of dishonorable men. Where are men of honor who have lived the truth of employing their power to protect and empower the vulnerable, who helped conceive lives and who stuck around to fight for their dignity? They are among us, and we need to be roused by their faithful witness of wholeness.

We need vision and we need a way forward. Otherwise, our shame will bury us and we will grieve God by failing to offer our uniquely masculine gift. We must also not forget the fallen. I may not sin on a grand scale today but I am still a sinner and my predatory brother is no less in need of God's mercy. If I consider him outside the reach of mercy, I know nothing of the Cross. We must call all men to join us in following this Jesus who embodies what it means to be an integrated man and

who poured Himself out in order to transform male lust into the fire of pure, impassioned love for women. As we wake up, may His light expose the darkness and steadily become ours.

‘All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and have given us over to our sins. Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all your people.’ (Isaiah 64:6-9)