

I have thought long and hard on how to write my philosophy on what life is all about. I have chosen to write it in an allegorical conversation form. It is very long in reading, but, I hope it brings you great meaning. It certainly gives me great joy to share it with you.

Just a Container

I am just a vessel, a common clump of clay; it is not for me to question 'WHY', but only for God to say.

One night while I was sleeping, the Lord Jesus Christ came to me in a dream. The King of the Universe, the Eternal One who stands astride history from beginning to end, called to me.

HE said, "Joe!! Come here! I have something that I want to show you."

I said, "Me, Lord? You want to talk with me?"

Jesus said, with a chuckle, "Yes, Joe, I want to talk with you. Why wouldn't I? You belong to me, Joe. I have called you by your name, you are mine."

I was, at once, both humbled and delighted. I anxiously said, "Yes, Lord. Here I am!"

Jesus then took me into a room that was a workshop of some kind. Looking around I recognized it as a Potter's workshop. In the center of that room sat an old Potter, wise in his ancient years. He had with him his potter's wheel, some water, tools, and an ugly clump of useless drying clay.

\Jesus said to me, "I want you to stand here with me, and watch this Master Potter at work."

At that very instant the old Potter took that lifeless hunk of clay in his crooked and gnarled fingers and started working water into the fissures and body of that clay. What moments before had been an ugly, hard, brownish color of no use, sprang to life in a vibrancy of elastic gray. Even the thickness and consistency of the clay spoke to its malleability. The Potter continued his kneading, pounding, and slamming of the clay,

adding bits of water as he saw fit. His fingers and palms appeared to become 'one with the clay', until. . . I noticed bits of twigs, pebbles, grass, and an occasional air bubble would work their way to the surface - whereupon the Potter would promptly remove the impurities, all the while continuing his probing preparation of the clay.

After what seemed to me to be an interminable amount of time, the Potter looked intently and critically at the clay in his hands, and in a voice barely audible said, "There, I believe you're finally ready to begin your journey." What was amazing was the gentleness and tenderness with which he spoke to it, almost as a father would to his child.

I looked at Jesus and asked, "Ready for what, Lord? That clay looks little better now than a few moments ago."

Jesus just smiled at me and said, "Watch! Watch what he does."

The clay, having passed inspection, the Master Potter THREW the slab of clay onto his spinning potter's wheel. His fingers and palms, aided by some tools, quickly and expertly worked, shaped, and molded that formless lump into what appeared to be a water pitcher. Effortlessly he shaped the clay, and then just as quickly, he picked it up, threw it back down and started over, commenting to no one in particular about 'imperfections'.

I thought to myself, "What was wrong with that? It looked pretty good to me. I wonder what it was he saw that was so imperfect?"

Again the clay rose up into a water pitcher. At the peak of his molding the spout, just when it looked to be finally shaped, the pitcher fell in upon itself in a total collapse. The Potter remarked, "The clay is not cooperating with me. ' it wasn't properly centered upon the wheel. I'm just going to have to start over."

Six times the Potter re-threw the clay upon his wheel until, at long last, the pitcher came out exactly as he envisioned it. The Potter proceeded to quickly make the handle for the pitcher and set both aside to dry on a shelf centered over a long table against the wall.

I followed Jesus and the Potter over to this table where there were several water pitchers, all in various stages of completion.

Jesus looked at me and said, "The just completed pitcher and handle will take several days to completely dry." "Now, look at the Potter."

The Potter proceeded to attach a handle to one of the not as yet completely dry pitchers. After attaching it he took some tools and trimmed it, smoothed it, and etched it on its side with some beautiful designs and carvings. He then flipped it upside down and on its bottom he carved his name and the following inscription, 'One hundred percent authentic - without wax' .

I asked Jesus what all of this meant. Jesus replied, "While the pitcher is still somewhat damp, but in a partially hardened state, the Potter will affix the handle, trim and etch the exterior, and in a final act of ownership and authenticity he will affix his personal mark on the bottom. He will then add his personal guarantee that the pitcher is one hundred percent authentic, without wax".

"Without wax? What do you mean, without wax?", I asked.

Jesus then told me, "There are a lot of fakes and counterfeits out there in the marketplace, many using wax to fill in and cover over cracks and imperfections in the clay. Only by holding the pitcher up to a bright light or in the sun can a person see the imperfections and the wax used to cover them up." "The Master Potter only produces flawless, real, authentic pieces."

The next table section held water pitchers that were completely dry. I asked, "Are these now ready to be used?"

"No", Jesus replied. "As ready as they may appear to be, they are very brittle and unsuitable for use."

Jesus moved along the table a little further to more pitchers that were of a variety of bright, vibrant, and beautiful colors - some of them so vibrant they appeared to be translucent on their surface. It was like you could peer into the very soul of the piece.

I asked, "How did these pitchers come about?"

Jesus went on to explain that, "These pitchers have all gone through the intense fires of that brick kiln over there in the corner." "Every vessel is placed into that kiln for several hours where it is subjected to the most brutal of heat and fire. This process brings about transforming, fundamental changes in the clay that are dramatic and permanent."

"How so?", said I.

"Well, in several ways," said Jesus. "The intensity of the fire increases the hardness and strength of the clay. The furnace sets the character and shape of the vessel forever, making it sturdy and unchangeable in its nature."

"What about that pitcher right there?", I asked. "The one with the varied and vibrant colors, the exquisite etchings? It shines and reflects so clearly the Potter's expertise, it's almost as if I can see myself while looking through it."

Jesus laughed and said, "You have a good eye for true value and beauty. Those vessels there, and that one in particular, are the Potter's most valuable and represent the highest of his creative ability. And it's not because they're necessarily better - but are more valued because the process the Potter uses is more involved."

"How", I asked.

Jesus said to me, "For most vessels coming out of the oven, the process is at an end. Whatever colors, etching, or glazing that was added was done before the firing in the oven." "But, the vessel you're looking at, and the others like it, they have their coloring and glazing dusted onto the surface after the first firing in the oven." "The vessels are then placed back into the oven for a second firing where it undergoes another trial of heat for several hours at a lower temperature. These vessels cost the most to produce and are prized by collectors worldwide." "They represent the highest achievement, artistry, and craftsmanship of the Master Potter."

At this point I finally asked Jesus, "Lord, while this has been very interesting, what does it all mean?"

"Simply this, Joe", replied the Lord, "**YOU** are the clay and **I Am** the Master Potter."

Jesus continued, "I took you out of the earth as an unformed substance. I molded you, shaped you, broke you down when needed, and reshaped you until I had removed the impurities ... and let me tell you, Joe, you weren't very cooperative or easy to work with. You, at times, wouldn't let me 'center you', you've been argumentative, difficult, fearful, and untrusting. However, through it all, **I still love you**. It was my fingers of life circumstance that worked you, molded you, and shaped you through the difficulties of life's daily grind, through the fiery trials, the pressure, friction, and heat that came from my hands and my furnace.

Many were the times that you cried out, 'Lord, What are you doing?!' However, does the clay have the right to ask or tell what it is the Master Potter is doing, or making?

Joe, I'll answer your question when you can first answer mine - 'Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?' Remember, from dust you came, unto dust you shall return.

Joe, not all vessels that are created are equal in color or beauty - some are for public display, others for praise, and still others for everyday common use. **BUT**, and this is very important, all vessels created by Me, the Master Potter, are created equal in value. All vessels are created to be used equally in the service of others. Their function may be different, their service is not.

And one more thing, all vessels, to be useful, must contain something. An empty vessel has no purpose and is useless to itself and others.

In My Kingdom, I created all mankind to contain My Holy Spirit, to be real authentic Christ filled people (no wax) , to reflect My translucent glory, and to live each day in a real personal vibrant relationship with Me. To live this way gives purpose to your life, Joe, and makes each day an act of worship and obedience to Me.

Joe, what you are is more important than what you do or any service you may render. What is vital is that you are available, as a container, to be filled by My Holy Spirit and to let Me express My glory to others through the display of Godly character and behavior that I will pour out of your life vessel as a blessing for others.

I was totally stunned and humbled into complete silence. The silence ... was absolutely deafening. After further reflection upon the Lord's words, all I could bring myself to say was, "Lord, You're right. Thou art the Potter, I am the clay. I'm here to be Your container, filled with Your presence, and poured out for a blessing to others - to show the riches of Your love and grace.

My philosophy of what life is all about is this, It is Christ in me, He lives and resides in my heart, and He's my Hope for the glory of Heaven.

Joe O'Neill