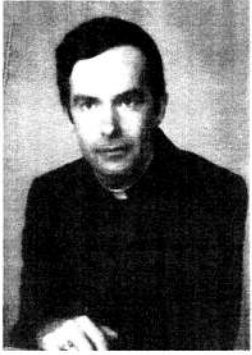


Chaplain's Corner, Hughes Camp Chaplain Richard W Rudd



Once more, we have completed the uneventful season of dog days in July and August. Labor Day marks the unofficial beginning of Fall and the annual cycle of holidays. Animals live only in the present; every day is the same to them. Only man observes holidays as individuals and collectively as families and nations.

The term holiday is derived from holy day, those days on the church calendar when we Christians commemorate the important events of our faith. Observed with traditional rituals, holidays are meant to be much more than gratification of our desire for fun and pleasure and a break from the monotonous routine of ordinary life. Understood in their full meaning, they incorporate memories of the past and hopes for the future and provide the occasions and forms to celebrate and reenact past events that portray our personal and collective beliefs and values. We just observed Halloween when children mock death, laugh at the grotesque, and collect treats. As adults, we observe All Hallows Eve by honoring the saints who are in Heaven. Thanksgiving is commonly associated with food, but its real purpose is to give God thanks for all of our blessings. During our childhood, we associate Santa Claus, reindeer, and the giving and receiving of gifts with Christmas. Later, we learn it celebrates the first Advent of Christ. Rabbits, eggs, and candy first come to mind when we think of Easter, the holiday's pagan symbols and name. And once again, we learn later that the Pasch commemorates the Passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. Memorial Day marks the unofficial beginning of Summer with picnics and outdoor recreation. As children, most of us have not experienced death through the loss of the ones we love. As we age, those losses occur and we honor the memories of those who have passed. Independence Day is more than the childish burst of loud noises and bright lights. It celebrates the freedom we value so highly and honors the sacrifices of our Founding Fathers and patriots who made it possible. Children in school are taught that important dates in Confederate history are associated with slavery. As adults, we have the responsibility to learn more

about American history and discover that Confederate holidays commemorate a defense of freedom.

As children, we experience important events and the holidays that mark them on a superficial level. Our parents would say as St. Paul said to young Christians, "I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it..." (I Cor. 3:2) But, as the author of Hebrews wrote, "... (E)very one who lives on milk is... a child. But solid food (strong meat) is for the mature." (5:12) As adults, we should not continue to think as children. Children have not accrued a past and are carefree about tomorrow. Like their pets, they live in the present. As we age, we develop an awareness of the three dimensions of time by acquiring a past and pondering the prospects of the future, giving us a wider perspective from which to view the present.

Although the past is as recent as one second ago, we tend to think of history as that vast expanse that lies beyond our personal experience. Either way, it exists only in our memory. On one hand, unlike the present that is fleeting and the future that is depleting, the past grows with its content. Yet, the past ceases to exist; only its effects remain. It is not a time to be nostalgic for, an antique to preserve and cherish. When used properly, it provides illumination with which to view our present circumstances and vision into the future. The future is eschatological and looms ahead in our hopes and fears. Its formation can be the result of the effects of the past and present. The past and present are mysterious. Like children with prolific imaginations, even adults can be lured into dreams of what the past was or the future will be to retreat from the realities of the present. The present is where the past and future intersect, the future being transformed into the past. We note this every New Year's Eve, but it is a kinetic continuous process.

St. Paul said, "When I was a child, ... I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways." (I Cor. 13:11) When radical liberal adults do not get their way, they throw tantrums by rioting, vandalizing, and looting. As revisionists, they distort the past to justify the mess they make in the present and to conform the future to their childlike fantasies. They continue as adults to think, reason, and act in childish ways.

It is critical that we be honest about the past, realistic about the present, and practical about the future, not manipulative, idealistic, or illusionary.

Without a clear memory of the past and vision for the future, we will stumble around in the present like children learning to walk. We are physical beings. We connect with the past through our ancestors, experience the present through our senses, and pass our traditions and beliefs into the future through our children. The holidays we celebrate, including those associated with the Confederacy, should be occasions for us to learn and reflect on their true meaning, build unity, provide stability, inculcate patriotism and Christian values and morality, and transmit our traditions to subsequent generations of Americans.

Fr Richard Rudd

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