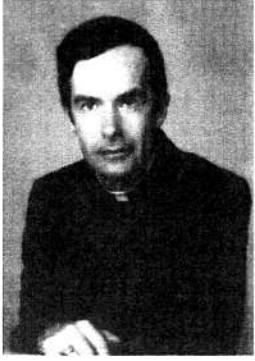


Chaplain's Corner, Hughes Camp Chaplain Richard W Rudd



All of us have an innate need to be needed. Most of us have a sense of purpose, the will to accomplish something in life, and the desire to be known and recognized for who we are and what we have done. Unless one is a spy, total anonymity is normally unwanted. Friends and family give us recognition just for who we are.

But, the general public gives recognition for what we do. When people first meet, they usually exchange names and then inquire about what they do in life. Our type of work is closely associated with our identity. Recognition for what we do comes in different degrees, whether by name or visibility. One might accomplish something that makes their name known, but allow them to appear in public unnoticed. Earning facial recognition can come at the price of loss of privacy and freedom of movement. Public recognition also comes in different types, whether in the form of fame or infamy. The followers of Nimrod at Babel became infamous when they boasted, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves..." (Gen. 11:4) Except for Nimrod, none of their names are known. Today, recognition might be sought with less august aspirations. Just as dogs often bark, not to be ferocious, but merely to get attention, so children sometimes misbehave for the same reason and some adults achieve notoriety for their criminal activities. Whatever the degree or type of recognition and whatever its duration, we are known and perhaps remembered, for better or worse, for what we do.

Fame can be transitory. As a child, I can remember small jets writing letters and making symbols in the sky with the vapor discharged from their engines. What was plain for all to see eventually evaporated and was forgotten. JFK was a popular president and the last to be assassinated. For many years that sad anniversary was commemorated with solemnity. Nearly 60 years later, Nov. 22 passes as just another day. Recently, I asked, to no avail, an individual in their early 20's if they recognized the name of a late orchestra leader who had a TV show and national fame in the

1950's and '60's. It takes only about two generations before many people's hard-earned fame evaporates like a jet's vapor trail.

Dementia is a terrible affliction of one's mentality, making victims of the patient and all of those who care for them. The patient no longer knows their family and friends and those who care feel helpless, knowing there is nothing they can do to cure the malady. To want desperately to accomplish something, whatever it might be, and to be prevented from doing it, regardless of the reason, whether it be due to lack of opportunity or mental, physical, or fiscal capability, is tormenting. One of the worst things than can be said about somebody is for one to say intentionally that they wish they never knew them. Unintentionally, the passage of time produces the same effect as dementia when successive generations forget their predecessors and their accomplishments.

Beginning with Adam, of the millions of people who have lived and all of the things they have done, few have their names carved in the stone of perpetuity. The Good Samaritan selflessly cared for the victim of robbers who left him half dead (Lk. 10:30), but we do not know his name. And "...wise men from the East came to Jerusalem..." and "...they saw the Child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshipped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts..." (Matt. 2:1, 11) This historic event, known as the Epiphany, was the first time the Messiah was revealed to Gentiles, yet we do not know their names. We know the eternal fate of the two men hung on crosses beside Christ at Calvary because of what they did in the final hours of their lives, but their names remain unknown.

Most of us who strive to defend the cause of our Founding Fathers and Confederate heroes will not achieve a place in recorded history like Washington and Jefferson, Davis and Lee. Most of us who propagate the Gospel, some still suffering persecution and martyrdom, will not have their names listed with the apostles. With the passage of time and at the hands of editors and revisionists, the place of the names and accomplishments of those recorded in history books and today's headlines can be

temporal and fleeting. The only lasting recognition is realized by those whose names are written on people's hearts and for "...those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. 21:27) To him who is faithful, Christ promises, "...I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." (Rev. 3:5) Not all of us are given the same talents or responsibilities, but whatever our role is, we can all be part of one team working for a common goal. It is not the magnitude of our task that matters; it is our faithfulness, dependability, diligence, and courage that count. Christ promises that if "...you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much..." The only recognition that matters when our work is finished is to hear Christ tell us, "Well done, good and faithful servant..." (Matt. 25:21)

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