

Dear People Whom God Loves,

I invite you to reflect on this delightful and profound insight of G.K. Chesterton.

*Life is serious all the time,
but living cannot be.
You may have all the solemnity
you wish in your neckties,
but in anything important
(such as sex, death, and religion),
you must have mirth
or you will have madness.*

Here are my thoughts: There is something deep and mysterious about sex, death and religion. I think that is why we need the dynamic interaction of realizing this importance and at the same time keeping a sense of humor about them.

There is something deep about sex. Our sexual identity is quite close to who we are. That is why it is so essential that we respect that identity in ourselves and others. When our sexual identity is not valued we are deeply hurt and even damaged at a level that is close to who we are.

There is something deep about death. We humans are the only species that knows that we will die. We know (even if we tend to put it out of our mind) that life as we know it on earth will not last forever. We have to (whether willing or not) face that there is an end to this life. We are ultimately vulnerable.

There is something deep about religion. Religion is our struggle to find some answer to ultimate questions. Is there any final meaning to life? Is life just a joke and then we die? Is life just a big joke? Is there reason to hope? Is there something ultimate that we can hang on to? Is there reason to be good and loving? Why shouldn't I just grab onto what I can no matter what the consequences? Why do the innocent suffer? Why does bad behavior seem to win? Does love come to an end?

There is something mysterious about sex. Is it physical? Is it spiritual? Is it both? How can something so wonderful also be so destructive? Why can it be so bonding and also so alienating?

There is something mysterious about death. Is death the end? Is death a beginning? What happens when I die? Am I forever cut off from those I love

and those who love me? Will I be full of joy or pain? Will I face ultimate reality or not? Is ultimate reality loving or vengeful?

There is something mysterious about religion. Religions strive to give answers to these questions. However, the answers (though they can be reasonable to accept) are beyond reason. Science (though able to answer many deep questions) cannot tell us if there is ultimate reality and much less what ultimate reality is like. Religious answers depend on faith. By faith I am not referring to acceptance of doctrinal formulation. These formulations have their place and can be helpful, but that is not what I mean here. Faith is an awareness (not from reason) of a presence of ultimate reality that cannot be adequately expressed in words. This awareness also says that ultimate reality is love or loving and we are all connected to ultimate reality and one another.

It we are terribly impressed and interested in having a handsome face, that may be silly but is not terribly dangerous. On the other hand because sex, death and religion are so deep and important, we had better keep a sense of humor about them and not take ourselves too seriously.

Smile, God Loves You,
Father Clay