

I recently spoke at my brother's homegoing celebration in San Antonio, Texas. Senior Master Sergeant Howard P. Howard Jr (Retired) was a giant in my life and in the lives of many others. In deference to his having been a life-long Catholic, I wanted to speak a few words of encouragement to his family and friends. The more I thought and prayed my way through this wonderful opportunity, the more blessed I became. This little devotion came out of my brother's eulogy.



*Sonny sees Marlene at surprise 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party June 2006*



*Back row: Mary Lou, Sonny  
Front: yours truly and Noel*

When we were all kids, the Baltimore Catechism was **the** manual used to teach us about faith in Jesus and about Catholic Doctrine. Written in 1597, this was the only “manual” we ever had to teach us what it meant to be a Christian. The format (as I remember it) was Question / Answer. Since our home parish was very small, we had no parochial school, thus our pastor would have a couple of missionary nuns come for two weeks every summer to teach us catechism. There was one problem with this plan, though. Every summer, different nuns would come to teach us, and because no record was apparently kept as to how far we ever got in memorizing the answers to the Catechism questions, invariably the nuns would start teaching us with the first question year after year after year! Now after close to seventy years of life, I still remember the first two questions, and I must say, they have come to be cherished as true and ever so meaningful.

Question # 1: Who made you?  
Answer #1: **God made me.**

Question # 2: **Why** did God make you?

Answer #2: God made me

- 1) to know Him
- 2) to love Him
- 3) to serve Him on this earth
- 4) to be happy with Him in eternity.

How precious it is to grasp, to realize, to drink in – the delicious truth that God made you – you individually – to know Him. Has He spoken this in His word? Oh yes! Listen to His heart as He speaks to you and me today through His servant Hosea:

**I don't want your sacrifices; I WANT YOUR LOVE.**

**I don't want your burnt offerings; I WANT YOU TO KNOW ME!** (Hosea 6:6 LB)

In all of our life journeys, in all of the experiences that we have, this is the one driving desire on God's heart: He wants us to know Him! What kind of God is this?

Do you realize that in every other religion of the world, men are forever trying to find God. In every other religion of the world, men try to placate whatever God they worship. It is only the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it is only the God of the Bible who comes to find man. It is He and He alone who comes seeking friendship with those He created. It is He who comes in the person of His Son Jesus to bridge the gap between Himself and those upon whom He has set His affection.

I can so easily take this simple yet profound catechism answer before Him even today and say to Him,

*Oh Lord, You made me to KNOW YOU; I kiss Your beautiful Son.*

*O Father, You desire me to LOVE YOU; I return the Love You showed me in Your incarnate Son Jesus.*

*Oh God, You made me to SERVE YOU; Behold, my God, I surrender my life to you even now. Love through me as You please. Make Yourself known through me. I say with Mary, the earthly mother of Your Son, "I am Your handmaiden. Do to me that which pleases You!"*

*Beloved Father, You made me so we could be happy together in eternity! Thank you for beginning that divine romance even now on earth. Oh, might we grow in this relationship from glory to glory until that day of fullness comes when I can gaze upon You face to face!*

As my brother's last years unfolded, he was beset by many physical afflictions. He prayed earnestly to be healed of them, yet never realized the answer to his prayers here on earth. But thanks be to God, life here on earth is just the "on-ramp" for our true destiny. Listen to Jesus' promise to His friends:

*I am going away to prepare a place for you. And if I go away and prepare a place for you, **I will come back and take you to be with me, SO THAT YOU CAN BE WITH ME WHERE I AM.***  
*John 14:1*

And before Jesus left this earth to start preparing that place for Sonny and for you and for me, He did what only He could do – and He did it because He loved us. He offered Himself in total immolation as our sacrificial lamb – so that death itself would be utterly smashed and defeated by His goodness. Now we can say with enormous assurance, "*O death, where is thy sting? O death, where is thy victory?*" 1 Cor 15:55

How happy I am to know my brother is now healed! He knows Him now face to face. He has come into the fullness of his inheritance. How about you? Do you know Him? Do you love Him? Do you serve Him on this earth? If He is your friend, be sure of His coming in the fullness of time to escort you safely across that reality between time and eternity. What a hope!