

Fr. Perozich comments —

Kevin Wells key insights for me are:

- *Ennobling people, not enabling them.*
- *Transforming a suffering soul*
- *Peeling back the layers of the wound to forgive*
- *Letting others know that they are loved and capable of loving*
- *Ennoble children before the monsters can strike*
- *Ennobling and not becoming one of the monsters*
- *Silence of clergy enable monsters like Fr. Martin*
- *Martin enables sin rather than ennobling people*
- *Martin knows woundedness as a cause of homosexuality but he neglects it*
- *accompanying those with sexual disorders is pastoral and noble, enabling the behavior is not.*

FR. MARTIN'S NEIGHBORHOOD

KEVIN WELLS



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This past weekend, my 11-year-old daughter and I went to see *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* at the local theater. The movie, based on Mr. Rogers’s interaction and friendship with a hardscrabble magazine reporter, is a moving portrayal of the manner in which one’s tender love and care is able to **transform a suffering soul.**

A selfish act by the reporter’s father had left deep wounds—cynicism, anger—in his son. As the plot line develops, the troubled man sees in Mr. Rogers an authentic form of what was missing in his own life: proper fatherhood. Layers of the **wounds inflicted by the reporter’s father are peeled back, and exposed is his own power to forgive.**

“Love is at the root of everything,” Fred Rogers once said. “The greatest thing we can do is to help somebody know that **they’re loved and capable of loving.**”

Mr. Rogers, a Presbyterian minister, seemed remarkably untethered to anyone or anything outside of his Christ-appointed mission to help children see their own unique dignity and value. He knew of life’s monsters; his mission was to **ennoble children before the monsters could strike.**

For several years now, Fr. James Martin, appearing like-minded, has been tender-hearted in his care for those experiencing same-sex attraction and gender dysphoria. Unlike Mr. Rogers, **Fr. Martin seems to be enabling**

rather than ennobling. And it is for this reason that he has become one of the monsters.

I met Fr. Martin in his underwear. It's a funny thing—but I really did. He'd just emerged from the baths in Lourdes, France. I was next in line for the healing waters unearthed by St. Bernadette (and was also in my underwear). Because we share a similarly dry sense of humor, we exchanged quick glances that said, "Yeah, this is horribly embarrassing—but on the entire face of the earth, I wouldn't pick a different place to be."

Along with more than a hundred others, we had joined with the Order of Malta for the annual pilgrimage they arrange for the gravely ill. It was nine years ago, seemingly another lifetime. Fr. Martin was serving as a chaplain along with another Jesuit priest. I was *un des malades* (one of the sick ones) just recovering from brain surgery. It was during my recovery, unable to get out of bed, that someone gave me a copy of Fr. Martin's award-winning book, *My Life With the Saints*. I found it both charming and captivating.

At dinner one night, when I told him that I, too, was a writer finishing up a book, he happily said he'd like to read it. He then kindly offered to write a blurb.

"Love is at the root of everything," Mr. Rogers said.

It is this rooting that I keep thinking about. Mr. Rogers was rooted to a singular mission: to ennoble children so they could know the peace that God intended for them. God had placed this mission on his heart, he said. Fr. Martin, one of America's most famous priests, has rooted himself in ennobling the

same-sex-attracted community. And I don't doubt that he, too, believes God has nailed this mission to his heart. Yet he appears deeply averse to the Church's most important teaching on the subject of same-sex relations—namely, that it's impermissible and against the natural law.

It's a shame, because it doesn't have to be this way. **Fr. Martin could die a saint and be remembered as one of the great forces for good in this world if he decides to be a Catholic priest rooted in the fullness of Truth.**

Recently, **Fr. Martin tweeted**, “Interesting: ‘Where the Bible mentions [homosexual] behavior at all, it clearly condemns it. I freely grant that. **The issue is precisely whether the biblical judgment is correct.**’ ” This tweet marked the moment when Fr. Martin could have been converted by a hailstorm of fraternal correction from fellow priests and clergy. But nothing happened. Bishops and priests—save a very few—remained mute in the aftermath of the offending tweet.

Because of Fr. Martin's Mr. Rogers-like warmth, friendly smile and accompanying words, many millions—gay and straight alike—have *rooted* themselves to him. He is regarded as the long-muted prophetic voice of God. **And because so many thousands of bishops and priests have muted their own prophetic voice on the complementarity of the sexes, Fr. Martin's subterranean fight to normalize homosexual relations and same-sex marriage has been emboldened and advanced.** His words, tweets, and

thoughts will continue to spread throughout the world like an invisible poisonous gas.

Mr. Rogers was rooted to God in accompanying children. He unearthed and remedied the wounds caused by fathers; **Fr. Martin affirms those wounds. Dozens of studies have shown that homosexuality is directly related to such wounds. Fr. Martin knows this, but neglects it.** He remains rooted to his own liberal imprimatur on the permissiveness of God's love—while **accompanying those with sexual disorders is pastoral and noble, enabling the behavior is not.**

Those bishops and priests who do speak—as the Church compels them to—on the complementarity of the sexes, same-sex marriage, and gender “transitions” will be persecuted. These men are rooted to the burden of their identity. They know they are shepherds who must die for Truth. And in this post-Christian age, they know they will suffer because of their lonely, prophetic voice.

I sat across from one of these strong bishops last week. He described himself as a “Marian priest” whose life and entire ministry were uprooted after reading *In Sinu Jesu*—a book written by an anonymous Benedictine monk about Christ's sadness over priests who don't visit Him in the Blessed Sacrament.

Within hours of Fr. Martin's tweet, this bishop addressed it directly. This bishop speaks frequently about the need for penance, daily recitation of the rosary, and the vital need to spend time with Jesus in adoration.

“Martyrdom is coming,” he said, ironically, with a Mr. Rogers-like smile. “But I think that’s what God expects from me. So red or white [martyrdom]—I don’t know if that matters. I just know it’s coming. It’s where I am being led.” He knows that love is at the root of everything.

CRISIS MAGAZINE

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