

But I LIKE Spinach!

Did you hear what Dale Meyer said about Chester???

Who's Dale Meyer? The former Lutheran Hour Preacher and now President of the St. Louis Seminary.

What did he say? Well let me tell you:

The Meyer Minute for September 21, 2006

Cross the Mississippi River at Chester, Illinois, and you see a statue of Popeye the Sailor Man. The cartoon character with big forearms and a pipe in his mouth was based upon a real life river man from this southern Illinois town. You can hear his song, can't you? "I'm strong to the finish 'cause I eats me spinach. I'm Popeye the Sailor Man." With e-coli showing up, I hope Popeye is laying off the spinach these days.

The outbreak should encourage us to an old, often forsaken custom. Do you pray at mealtime . . . or are you blasé about the blessing? When the Bible says, "Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord," it's acknowledging that we do need food to live (Deuteronomy 8:3). In fact, gratitude for food is so important that it found a central location in Jesus' succinct, sound byte prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11).

"Feed Thy children, God most holy; Comfort sinners poor and lowly. O Thou Bread of Life from heaven, Bless the food Thou here hast given! As these gifts the body nourish, May our souls in graces flourish Till with saints in heavenly splendor At Thy feast due thanks we render." Now that truly will be "strong to the finish!"

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This whole business of problems with spinach leads me to think.

Spinach is really good for you. But when there is just a little of something else mixed in it can be really bad. How many things in life are that way? So many things are good in themselves, but have been mixed with what is wrong. In fact, we ourselves are that way. We are "sinner/saints" and that explains so many things about our lives.

Here is a little poem I learned recently:

Two natures beat within my breast
One is cursed, the other is blessed.
The one I love the other I hate.
The one I feed will dominate.

There is a battle within us. The two natures cannot co-exist peacefully. One or the other will win out. The purpose and goal of the old sinful nature is to get as far from God as possible, and if that nature gets its way we will lose for eternity.

How to fight.

If we are in the middle of this battle, we need to know how to fight against sin and darkness.

So many parents, teachers, and pastors have told us the same thing. Feed your soul with what is right and true. Synod President Al Barry made it his first theme: "Be In the Word." Feed your soul with the Word of God. Constantly. Why? The two natures battle. The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. ("The one I feed will dominate.")

If you have a pet sin that you indulge in, the old sinful nature will not be satisfied with that. It will become stronger -- and you will find sins coming along that you do not want.

But if you feed your soul with the Word of God; and remember your Baptism; and worship and commune regularly -- then the New Man will be strengthened. You will find God's help in many areas of your life that you might not have expected. So "Be In the Word." Use the Word of God reading your Bible. Use the Word of God in Worship. Use the Word of God in Prayer.

Finally, here are some passages that talk about the battle:

Romans 7:14-25 about the Old Adam
Ephesians 6:10-20 about the Armor of God
Galatians 5:17-25 about the battle
Galatians 5:22-23 the fruit of the Spirit
Philippians 4:8-9 dwell on such things

There are many more.

And when it is safe eat your spinach.

Pastor Mark