

Head, Heart or Gut?

Are you a head person, a heart person or a gut person? This summarizes in one question our entire Lenten study using the spiritual personality typing of the Enneagram. Though over-simplified, this in essence is the theory; there are three centers by which we encounter reality, head, heart and gut, and though we partially use all three, only one of the three is dominant. Being aware of whether we are primarily a head, heart or gut type is beneficial because it can help us recognize our virtues and vices, and thereby better know and love each other. It can also help us to better know and love God, for these three types have very different ways of following God in their strengths and straying from God in their weaknesses. So today on Easter Sunday, I want to look at how three of Jesus' own disciples related to Jesus in each of these three ways, and how their type was redeemed in the light of Jesus' Easter Resurrection. My prayer is that their examples will help us discern if we are a head disciple, a heart disciples or a gut disciples, and how each of us are called to grow further in God's grace.

Peter was a gut disciple, are you like him? Their center of gravity lies in the belly and they are intuitive and spontaneous. Gut people react instinctively with an immediate like or dislike for everything; they can be strong leaders. There is no disciple more spontaneous than Peter. He shoots first and asks questions later. The first time he meets Jesus, he quits his job as a fisherman on the spot and follows Him. Later when they come to arrest Jesus, it is Peter who draws his sword to fight. Gut disciples, like Peter, have the great virtues of putting their love of Jesus into action and leading others to do the same. Our church relies on gut types to help put our faith into action. But gut disciples also have vices. Peter was constantly reprimanded-for getting ahead of himself, ahead of his friends, and especially ahead of Our Lord. Peter is the first to follow Jesus, but also the first to flee after his arrest. Peter's strength is also his shadow, but in the light of Jesus' Easter Resurrection he begins to mature as a Christian. Mature gut types learn that their instinct to action is not always what God or loved ones need first. Peter seems to learn this, and by the time we meet again in the Acts of the Apostles, he seems to have tempered his gut with the ability to think and feel for others and for God.

Mary Magdalen was a heart disciple, maybe you are like her? Heart disciples are all about relationships, and experience themselves in reaction to the feelings or behaviors of others. They are so in tune to others' feelings and helping others, that they can sometimes need to be needed. Mary Magdalen truly loved Jesus, and along with Jesus' mother was the only disciple at the cross with Jesus in his time of need. She also is known as the woman who poured perfume-mixed with her own tears-over Jesus' feet and dried them with her hair. What a gesture of whole-hearted devotion to a man whose death was imminent! Heart disciples, like Mary, love Jesus and love others, sticking with them in times of joy and pain. Heart disciples are the glue which hold churches together. But heart disciples also have vices. Though Mary's heart leads her to first see Jesus after his Easter resurrection, he quickly reprimands her "Do not cling on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father." (Jn 20:17) Mary's heart is still clinging to the Jesus she loves and needs, not yet able to love Him from who he has become. Mary's strength is also her shadow, but in the light of Jesus' Easter Resurrection, she begins to mature as a Christian. Mary tempers her heart with thought and action, rushing off to be the first witness to the other Apostles of the new Jesus. Redeemed heart disciples learn that loving others well means loving them for who they are, not who we want them to be.

Thomas is a head disciple, are you like him? Head disciple's control tower is of course their mind. They have a strong senses of fairness, order and duty and are good with big picture stuff. However, they also tend to get stuck in their heads, substituting thought for real contact with people. Thomas is infamously known as doubting Thomas, but doubt is not the opposite of faith. In fact it is Thomas' deep questions of Jesus which help Jesus reveal the depths of who he is. Our church needs head disciples for the depth, perspective and balance they provide. But head disciples also have vices. Thomas, like many head people, tend to withdraw from situations to reflect instead of being present in the moment. Thomas cannot believe, cannot love the risen Christ until Jesus takes Thomas' hands and inserts them into his crucifixion wounds. (Jn 20:27) Thomas' strength of doubt is also his shadow of distance, but in the light of Jesus' Easter Resurrection, he begins to mature as a Christian. In time her gets out of his head, and into the nitty gritty of the lives of the people who are standing in front of him. Thomas goes on to becomes the disciple who spreads the Gospel to the far ends of the Earth, to India and beyond.

Are you a head disciple, a heart disciple or a gut disciple? I hope I have given you a taste today of why it is important to know. For the more we know our God given strengths, the more we can bring those strengths to build up ourselves, others and the body of Christ. And the more we are aware of our weaknesses, the more we trust that weakness is perfected in God's grace and that the light of Jesus' Resurrection overcomes all darkness. Now and always; amen.