WITNESS: Now whose death do you suppose terminated it?

ATTORNEY: And by whose death was it terminated?

ATTORNEY: How was your first marriage terminated?

ATTORNEY: Can you describe the individual?

WITNESS: He was about medium height and had a beard.

ATTORNEY: Was this a male or a female?

WITNESS: Guess.

ATTORNEY: Doctor, how many of your autopsies have you performed on dead people?

WITNESS: All my autopsies are performed on dead people. Would you like to rephrase that?

ATTORNEY: Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: Did you check for blood pressure?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: Did you check for breathing?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: How can you be so sure, Doctor?

WITNESS: Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar.

ATTORNEY: I see, but could the patient have still been alive, nevertheless?

WITNESS: Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law.

ATTORNEY: Doctor, you forgot?

WITNESS: I forget.

ATTORNEY: And in what ways does it affect your memory?

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: This myasthenia gravis, does it affect your memory at all?

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: How many were boys?

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: She had three children, right?

WITNESS: None.

ATTORNEY: How many were boys?

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: Were there any girls?

WITNESS: Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar. I see, but could the patient have still been alive, nevertheless?

ATTORNEY: The youngest son, the 20 year-old, how old is he?

WITNESS: Uh, he’s 20.

ATTORNEY: She had three children, right?

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: How many were boys?

WITNESS: None.

ATTORNEY: Were there any girls?

WITNESS: Are you kidding me? Your Honor, I think I need a different attorney. Can I get a new attorney?

ATTORNEY: How was your first marriage terminated?

WITNESS: By death.

ATTORNEY: And by whose death was it terminated?

WITNESS: Now whose death do you suppose terminated it?
Does Jesus Have a Sense of Humor?

Back in October, a benefactor shared his reflections on whether or not Jesus had a sense of humor. After reading his conclusion, I thought, “Hmmm … this will make a good topic for a Cross Links reflection!”

Many people see Christianity as a humorless religion. Salvation is a deadly serious business, they say, and there is no room for mirth or laughter. This attitude goes way back to the Church Fathers and a source on the Internet that gave me several quotes from such luminaries at Augustine, John Chrysostom and Thomas Aquinas, among others, but when I tried to locate it for this reflection, I couldn’t find it. To a man, they claimed that humor in religious matters was the work of the devil.

This attitude still exists today. When was the last time, for example, you felt really free to burst out with a huge laugh in church? Maybe there might be a polite chuckle, but certainly not something that would keep you giggling long after the punch line. Heck, I can’t even get people to clap joyfully at a wedding when I first introduce the bride and groom as “Mr. and Mrs. …”

In the Gospels, we see twice that Jesus wept over Jerusalem and at the death of His friend Lazarus. Not once do we read that He laughed or even smiled. But does that necessarily mean He didn’t? We don’t hear of Him brushing His teeth, washing His tunic, going for a swim in the Sea of Galilee, snoring while He sleeps. Just because the Gospels are language gap. Our Scripture is a translation of the Greek, so many of the funny stories in the Gospel come with a simple facial expression or the inflection of His voice. For Him, laughter and seriousness are not mutually exclusive. Perhaps you’ve even met the type — online or in person.

But this understanding of the Christian life is incomplete. Jesus uses humor to teach, heal, convert and, ultimately, to human frailty. Indeed He did encourage us to take His yoke upon our shoulders. It makes light the yoke of sin, death, and suffering and sorrow. In fact, in His Farewell Discourse the night before He died, when His heart was most sorrowful, He said, “I do not pray for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word” (John 17:20).

Or take Mark’s account of the miracle of the feeding of the 5000. Jesus fed them five loaves and two fish. How much of the magic is in the words? Stretch your imagination to the point where you imagine the embarrassed looks on their faces when they found out Jesus knew what they had been talking about? “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” (Matthew 22:21)” for Him, laughter and seriousness are not mutually exclusive. Perhaps you’ve even met the type — online or in person.

But this understanding of the Christian life is incomplete. Jesus uses humor to teach, heal, convert and, ultimately, to redeem. For Him, laughter and seriousness are not mutually exclusive. Perhaps you’ve even met the type — online or in person.

By the way, do you want a real insight into Divine humor? How about this: the Son of God, the Messiah, was born as a baby; born in backwater Bethlehem, not a national capital; born in a manger, not a palace; born to a woman barely into her teens, with a much older husband (so says tradition); and even better, conceived in not-quite-the-natural way. Christ’s first visitors were not members of His extended family, but shepherds from the fields smelling like sheep (to use Pope Francis’ wonderful words!); and who was the puritanical. Someone who views frivolity as sacrilege and puritanical. Someone who views frivolity as sacrilege and humor as heresy. Perhaps you’ve even met the type — online or in person.

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