Clipping of Note NUMBER 23

Just YOU!

WE are asked to imagine the following parable: Joe Doakes passed away and floated up to the Pearly Gates. He pounded on the gates and St. Peter appeared.

"Who are you, may I ask?"

"My name is Joe Doakes, sir."

"Where are you from?"

"I am from Updale, U.S.A."

"Why are you here?"

"I plead admittance, Mr. St. Peter."

St. Peter scanned his scroll and said, "Yes, Joe, you are on my list. Sorry I can't let you in. You stole money from others, including widows and orphans."

"Mr. St. Peter, I had the reputation of being an honest man. What do you mean, I stole money from widows and orphans?"

"Joe, you were a member, a financial supporter and once on the Board of Directors of the Updale Do-Good Association. It advocated a municipal golf course in Updale which took money from widows and orphans in order to benefit you and a hundred other golfers."

"Mr. St. Peter, that was the Updale Do-Good Association that took that action, not your humble applicant, Joe Doakes."

St. Peter scanned his scroll again, slowly raised his head, and said somewhat sadly, "Joe, the Updale Do-Good Association is not on my list, nor any foundation, nor any corporation, nor any trade association, nor any labor union, nor any other organization. All I have listed here are persons, just persons."

THE above quotation is a rather remarkable parable. Can't you just hear someone else arguing with St. Peter:

"But Mr. St. Peter, I had orders from my government to put those Jews in the gas chamber."

"But Mr. St. Peter, it was the policy of the church to persecute others. I was only a humble servant of the church."

"But Mr. St. Peter, I was only one of the mob, how do you know that my rock killed the Negro?"

"But Mr. St. Peter, when I killed all of those women and children I was in the service of my country."

And always the inexorable answer: "All I have listed here are persons, just persons."

....WE SHOULD know that conscience, reason, knowledge, integrity, judgment and all other virtues are the distinctive and exclusive properties of individual persons. Committees and governments don't think; only individuals think. Systems do not commit crimes; only individuals commit crimes....Majority decisions are not right merely because they are in the majority. The majorities which nailed Jesus to the cross, gave Socrates the cup of hemlock, burned John Hus at the stake, forced Galileo to deny what his telescope told him—were they right? In these cases the individual was right. May there not be just such situations today?

Excerpted from a sermon by Reverend Ernest H. Sommerfeld
Minister of The Church of the Unity, Springfield, Massachusetts
October 16, 1949

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