

When I was a corporate buyer for Barnes and Noble Bookstores all those many years ago, like all the buyers did I got to know the publisher sales reps very well- these reps came in once a month or once a quarter to our offices on 18<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> to sit down with you for a half an hour or so and go over all these titles that they were going to publish and you quickly learned how to cut through the sales pitch malarkey to get an idea of what they were actually selling you.

But you also got to know them- each meeting was always prefaced by talking about what was going on in their lives and them asking you about your own life, and many times they took you out to all these fancy-schmancy restaurants in Chelsea and the Flatiron district of Manhattan- really because the reps had expense accounts and why not use them?

In any case, one of the sales reps that I really got to like and to know was Frank Moster, one of the owners of Melman-Moster Associates- a lovely guy- a very soft-spoken man also from New Jersey like me- a man immensely proud of his family and of his golf game, who spent almost 50 years in publishing, and also one of the very few practicing Catholics who came in to see the buyers. He had all kinds of books from mostly small publishers and even if you weren't going to take any at all there was never any bad feelings about that on either side

The last time he came in to sell to me (which was also just after I had been accepted into the Capuchins) we talked about his upcoming retirement and he told me about the places he and his wife were going to see and the things he wanted to do and volunteer at, and as he was getting ready to leave my office, he said to me: *“You know, Sal, I knew when I first started this business that I wasn't going to change the world, but even if a couple of the books I sold made some people happy and gave them a little bit of escape from all the things they were dealing with in their lives, then that's good enough for me. I did what I had to do and what God wanted me to do and how can you get better than that?”*

Frank died a few years later and his obituary mentioned how happy he always was and how much he was cherished by all who knew him. How do you get better than that?

In God's Providence- in God's loving plan for the world and every person in it- every person has a part to play- every person has a task to fulfill- even Jesus Christ. Especially in St. John's Gospel you hear so many times that Jesus knew very well that he had been sent by His Father on a mission to save the world and every person in it. Over and over again you hear that the basic, the fundamental orientation of Jesus' life was to complete the task he had been given by His Father, and in the passage we just heard Jesus goes even further. He says that His accomplishing what He was sent to do has given glory to His Father and, now that His hour has come, He can once again return to the glory that He had with His Father from before the beginning of the world- a glory He had sacrificed in order to do His Father's will.

As one biblical commentator has said, *"Jesus glorified the Father through His faith, His obedience, and His work through the years of His earthly ministry. Every sermon preached, every blind or sick person healed, every bit of instruction and training for the disciples, every confrontation with the corrupt religious leaders, every question answered, every loving touch – they all glorified God the Father."*

And as with Jesus, the same with us, the members of His Body who are called and empowered to be other Christs in the worlds we are part of. Our fulfilling of our task- our vocation- no matter how ordinary or how boring or how hidden it may be- it glorifies the Father and it brings the Kingdom of God closer and closer to its realization, even though we have no sense at all that this is happening and we sometimes wonder if it's all for nothing.

Because you are doing so many things already to improve the lives of other persons and in this big, beautiful, interconnected world, everything we do, if it is done with a willing heart

and a desire to lift someone up and to live as they should be- then it is God's work- it is holy work and God is using it all to bring His Kingdom into being, and, to use a cliché, that's what it's all about.

My sales rep and my friend Frank Moster was not selling me the best books in the world, believe me- there were some real stinkers in the mix- but I'm sure some of those books that got into the stores were thoroughly enjoyed by people who needed to find them and read them and be made happy by them, and so maybe Frank has a special place in heaven just for that. I hope I do too.