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## Role Of Curiosity In My Life

I glared bitterly at the intricate but bold murals of ancient scriptures which dawned the ceilings of the dark hued church I was forced to be in, but at the same time transfixed by the way the reds, greens, and yellows of the dented stained glass windows playfully clashed against the serene blue-lighted water of the baptism pool in the middle of the House of Prayer. It was beautiful, and I was in awe, but I felt like an outcast, as if I was tainting the years of pain, love, worship, and purity which made it holy. For I did something I was not supposed to do.

I asked the Nun in my sixth grade religion class why I had to reconcile my sins with the Priest first and not directly to God. The class turned around and gaped at me with shock, along with a response from the dissatisfied Nun to not question the church because it was a sin. I was sent to the Priest shortly afterwards for a personal reconciliation, and to be forgiven for asking such an appalling question.

The elderly Priest sternly said my name with a trace of disappointment to pull my distracted wandering eyes away from the colorful light reflections. He respectfully informed me that he knew why I was here, and slowly asked me why I felt I had to ask the question that I did. I told him truthfully that I was curious as to why I could not just pray to God for forgiveness first and only. He then proceeded to ask me if I was Catholic, and I replied that I was raised as a Protestant. He averted his eyes to his crossed hands, was quiet for a few seconds, then looked me straight in the eye and said, "we don't say that here." Like any 11 year-old would be, I was confused and had even more questions to ask, so I asked why. The Priest stood up, and scolded me to not ask questions but to accept what I was told, because that is what God wanted of me.

Later in the evening at the dinner table, I elucidated to my parents what happened at school in religion class, and what the Priest so firmly told me. I was conflicted because my parents raised me to ask questions, to explore, and to be curious, but was it acceptable? Were my parents right, or were the Priest and Nun right? I laid in bed that night pondering if curiosity really does kill the cat, or if it contrarily opens up new windows and doors to learn, to become more knowledgeable.

Satisfied with my thoughts from the night before, and strong in my answer regarding curiosity, I excitedly went to school the next morning with a mental list of all the questions I wanted to ask in my religion class. When the hour came, and I was settled in my designated desk, the Nun asked to see me alone outside. Confused and wary of what was to come, I followed her and waited for her to speak. She told me that asking questions would only cause more confusion

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and disappointment because some of them cannot always be answered, and when they could be, I would not be pleased. So she encouraged me to listen to my classmates, to listen to her teach, and to listen to the words in the Bible. So I listened to her, to my classmates, and to the words in the Bible.

The rest of the school year was at times unbearable. I was lonely, an outcast. When my classmates were playing handball, I was on the grass reading a book about evolution. The girls I thought were my friends ditched me every lunch, so I mostly ate in the bathroom while reading. In religion class, I listened, and did not speak unless the Nun asked me a question. I did as I was told, and did not question what I was taught, or I would be laughed at and bullied by my peers.

When sixth grade concluded, my parents instantly pulled me out of Catholic school. My mom later told me that she felt like she lost her Emma because I hardly communicated or interrogated the Nun's. I was equally delighted and relieved to be out of that school as well. I experienced what it meant to just accept what you were told, to refrain from challenging the status quo, and I did not enjoy it one bit.

I realize each and every day the significance of my experiences in Catholic school, and how integral it is to question what you do not understand or believe in. I may have disagreed with the Priest and the Nun, but I will always be thankful to have met them because they taught me who I do not want to be. I want to be someone who asks questions, to explore, to be curious about everything, to ask, "why do you believe in that particular issue." I believe having an open mind is the key to expanding one's horizon.

Questioning something or someone, does not come without consequences at times. That is why it is equally as important to know when to be quiet, to listen. The Nun who taught my religion class wanted me to observe more and chatter less, even if her motive was to cease my questioning on everything she taught. It takes years to find the perfect balance between listening, talking, and questioning. I still have such a long way to go, but I find myself improving every day.

I've noticed that as an adult, people expect you to be educated and well-versed with what is happening in the world. If a question is asked, you better know the reasoning as to why you are asking the question because "stupid" questions just won't cut it anymore like it did it elementary, middle, and high school. I find this to be disappointing. No matter how little or tall we are, all of us have questions whether they are big or small.

If society were not curious, if we did not question our surroundings, or nature, or the people we see in the media, how would we be today? We would have no authors to write fantasy and

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adventure novels, or books explaining what racism and sexism is. No scientists to explore what kind of dinosaurs lived before we existed, or question how we came to be. No mathematicians to come up with new formulas, or to figure out how to build a structure that perfectly fits. No philosophers to study how nature, knowledge and reality interplay with each other. No psychologists to question how the brain of a murderer differs from a brain of someone who does not kill, or how people with special needs view the world from someone who is not special needs. No artists like Picasso, Da Vinci, or Bridgman to paint beautiful but unusual pictures. No artists to come up with magnificent lyrics to the songs we sing, or the music we play. These are just some simple examples of how curiosity has shaped our world, and unfortunately, we take it for granted.

So what I have learned, and what I will continue to learn for the rest of life, is to not be afraid to challenge someone with a question, and to not be afraid if they consider me to be annoying, or unknowledgeable. At the same time, I also need to perceive when it is not my time to speak, but to listen, and contemplate on the lesson being taught, or what the person has to say.

Curiosity does not kill the cat. At times it may get you in difficult waters, but sometimes we must go through the difficult waters in order to get somewhere worth being. Curiosity feeds the cat knowledge, understanding, and individual thought. Curiosity opens the path to wonderful opportunities that it would not give someone who is afraid to question the status quo. I want to be a part of that, and I think that is something worth fighting for, do you?

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