



Boston Catholic Journal

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An Unlikely Clientele

"Harlots shall go into the Kingdom of God before you."

St. Matthew 21.31



"In order to arrive at being everything, desire to be nothing."
St. John of the Cross. (Ascent of Mount Carmel 1.13.11)

Prostitutes have nothing.

They have their bodies ... and even this they do not possess ... but must surrender to others.

Prostitutes have always been the paradigm of worthlessness to the world. They are the receptacles into which the world pours its filth – and then calls *them* "dirty".

They are fictions. Pretending to love. Pretending to desire. Pretending whatever their predators wish them to pretend

They are the paid surrogates of the lonely, the numb fulfillment of the perverse; everything but anything.

All they have is that with which they came into this world, and that alone with which they leave it, and in that no man's land between the beginning and the end, the world has had its way with them, despising them ... because they uncover its shame.

Having used them, the world has no use for them.

But God does.

In fact, Christ tells us that they will enter the Kingdom before us. Not because they were prostitutes but because they believed ... Him. Despite all that they had done, or rather had allowed to be done to them by the "respectable" ... who could no more see Christ in the Holy Eucharist than they could in the prostitute.

Both sinned. But not both believed.

We are scandalized by this because we are hypocrites.

"But we are not prostitutes!" you say.

"And they are not hypocrites."

Nowhere does Jesus tell us that *hypocrites* will enter the Kingdom. Tax collectors, even more despised than the prostitutes (because they robbed the money that would have paid the prostitutes) will enter, together with the prostitutes ... before we will, if we do not believe ... even as they do.

They *know* they have no right. We do not.

Prostitutes are easy targets; we deceive one another and tell ourselves that we are not.

Look more closely. You will find that hypocrisy is likely the tip of an iceberg submerged in our pretensions, and that a far greater, a far deeper darkness lies beneath the surface. And *we* scorn prostitutes? ... *we* dare to be scandalized that Heaven is not closed to *them*?

No one earns the right to the Kingdom, no one lives so justly and sinlessly that Heaven is their due, their reward in all justice; we are simply more adept, more clever in concealing our sins ... from others ... and ourselves. But not from God – Who raises up the lowly and the despised, and sets the self-righteous and the hypocrites to naught.

It is *His* Kingdom --- not ours. Whom He chooses to enter will surprise us.

But even more surprising will be those Whom He has *not* chosen to enter. You know, the "believers" ... the self-righteous ... with stones heavy in their hands ...

Would that our sins were only those of a desperate and despised prostitute ...

