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"Show-on"

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"Show-on"

A show-off is someone who pretends to be more than he or she is, and seeks more attention from others than his or her actions merit. Show-offs are "off" in the sense of perhaps being pleasing to themselves, but not pleasing to others because of the falsity of their intentions. Our aspirations lie in the opposite direction, often doing things for others that they do not know, and yet pleasing ourselves, and becoming more of the persons we wish to become. Further, though we might remark to ourselves about the carelessness of others, there are small corrections we make for mistakes by others, and little acts we perform, that are simply the "right thing to do."

Though we do not know who, other than God, sees the considered and the spontaneous little things we intend as being helpful, our actions can make of each of us a "show-on" in the sense that what we do is well-ordered and in accord with who we are as members of many communities, including the human family. Making room for a person to pass through a line blocking an aisle is the simplest of courtesies, but it is the exact opposite of small-minded selfishness of which humans are quite capable. While it is possible to be nice for appearance's sake, we value choosing to go ever so little out of our way because we know that it is better for us to do so, whether or not anyone acknowledges our good intention.

A "show-on" can be seen and noticed by others, though receiving acknowledgment is not the reason for acting considerately. The essential rationale for everything from making space for a car to enter the lane we are in to suffering an injustice without seeking revenge is inside us, not in the opinions others might have of us. We see, and we feel the consequences of our decisions, whether it be increased self-respect and confidence that come to those who follow their inspirations, or the diminished sense of self that follows upon compulsive behavior. Praise or blame by others cannot take the place of the honest assessment we make of our own behavior. When we reflect on our actions, we know the qualitative difference between the approval we find inside ourselves and that which comes from others.

Perhaps God is the foremost "Show-on," whose deeds are greater than we can comprehend, and who, rather than seeking unmerited attention, is instead justly acclaimed by those who recognize God's goodness towards us. God reveals self to be more for us, to love us more than we even begin to love ourselves, especially in and through the person of Jesus Christ. The week following Christmas, some celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany, which is a wonderful example of "show-on:" Visitors come from far distant places with gifts for the little child, not for any possible recognition they might receive, but because they chose to follow "the star" of inspiration that they

had perceived. And the one they acclaimed as king was not in the least affected by their announcement, and very quickly had to be taken to a safe place where no one would ever think of his being a king.

At this point in our lives, if we have anything to show others, let it be the love in our hearts that is both our own to give, and also a gift we have been given.