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WALTER TRINKAUS IN MEMORIAM

*Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr.**

In the ancient world servants had distinctive roles. Walter Trinkaus embodied the attributes of three of these kinds of servants: teachers, heralds, and missionaries.

First, there were the *teachers*. In Greece the most revered slaves were the pedagogues, who—like Aesop—did their best teaching by telling stories. Who of us will forget a funny anecdote or two that Walter told? The beauty of Walter's humor was that it was almost never directed at another, but was simply calculated to tickle the funny bone and to raise a laugh. Mainly his humor was self-deprecating. When he did aim a story at someone on occasion, the moral of the story was usually so subtle that his target—generally someone in authority—would miss the point of his comment. But he would never pound home his point or insist on it; he just shrugged his shoulders when such a person just didn't get it.

Second, there were *heralds* in the ancient world. Sometimes these servants were noted for the trumpet blasts that accompanied the announcement of their messages (*Isaiah* 58:1). Sometimes they accomplished their task not by loud crying or by lifting up their voices, but by their quiet patience and endurance (*Isaiah* 42:2). In either case these servants did not trumpet their own personalities or herald their own achievements, but simply made sure that the world did not miss the more exciting news of the presence of a friend.

Walter Trinkaus was just such a servant. Sometimes he spoke softly and sometimes with the blast of a trumpet, but to make clear notes, not sour ones. For example, I recall vividly that when he argued with Fr. Raymond Decker—then the Associate Dean at Loyola Law School—about abortion in the pages of *Commonweal*, he seemed a lot clearer about the value of unborn life than Fr. Decker, but he never lost his respect for his priest friend. He taught us how to remain civil without diminishing our convictions. He taught us how to advance our claims without losing sight of the human person with

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whom we are contending. He was a true herald who blew clear blasts on the trumpet to announce his good news to all who would listen.

Third, there was another kind of servant in the ancient world. I have called them *missionaries*, but their principal task was more like that of modern travel agents. These servants attended to all the particular details of journeying, which was a pretty hazardous thing to do in the ancient world. Before computerized reservations, these advance men endured the risk of the journey themselves to make sure that the accommodations were just right. They went on ahead to attend to the details of the journey personally and then returned to assure the followers that all was ready. The Gospel according to John describes Jesus as such a servant: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also" (*John* 14:3).

Anyone who knew Walter Trinkaus would describe him as that kind of servant as well. Walter has now taken the last grand journey of life, beyond the grave. But he beckons to us from beyond that we can go forward without fear and without grandiosity. Because he was such a humble man, he probably had no idea that he had made it possible for thousands of people to be so much better than they otherwise would have been without him.

We who were privileged to know Walter Trinkaus, and who share his faith that in Jesus we have a servant who is an excellent teacher, herald, and missionary, can now greet him with full confidence that he has gone on ahead to prepare a place for us: "So long, Walt, have a wonderful eternity!"

Easter 1996