

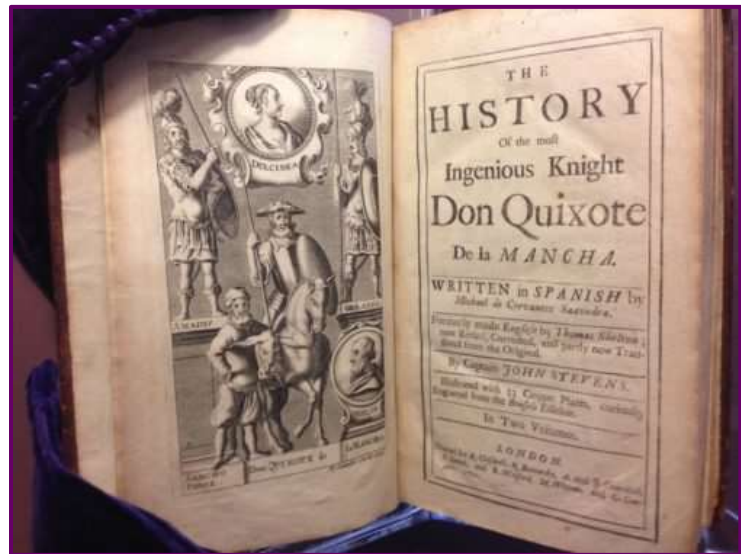
Learning from Don Quixote

The year 2018 is coming to a close, and we are rapidly approaching a new year, which is traditionally a time for reflection. We look back over the year and assess our successes and failures. We gain some satisfaction over our successes, and we experience some disappointment and guilt over our failures.

It's time we face a new beginning. We have hopes that things will be different and, hopefully, better.

Remember Miguel de Cervantes' story of Don Quixote? Cervantes was thrown into prison in Seville, Spain. Finding himself at the mercy of a band of cutthroats, he tried to divert them by telling them his story of Don Quixote, the *Man of La Mancha*.

In the story, Don Quixote pictures himself as a chivalrous knight. He goes forth to right all the wrongs of the world, but he is a man who lives in a world of impossible dreams. His armor is shabby, and his horse is sagging.



He rides for his fair lady, whom he calls Dulcinea, which means "Sweetness." But Dulcinea is far from a fair lady. She is a prostitute in a country tavern. She assures him that she is "the most casual bride of the murderous scum of the earth." Her real name, she says, is Aldonza. She resents Quixote's intrusion in her life, and screams at him, insisting that she is no kind of lady.

But Don Quixote persists: "And still thou art my lady." He says that he sees heaven when he sees her, to which she replies that all she can see is a dream covered with rusty tin.

Don Quixote's family tries to make him face reality. They want him to see the world as it really is. They try to shock him into reality. As they begin to succeed, his health and his spirit begin to break, and he is at the point of giving up his impossible dream. But just then, Aldonza comes into his room. She looks at him with grateful eyes and says, "You looked at me and called me by another name, Dulcinea." Aldonza had become a lady, her life renewed by someone who dared to believe in her and call her by a new name.

(more)

On Broadway, Don Quixote's life is summed up in the wonderful song *To Dream the Impossible Dream*. We sometimes forget that the first impossible dreamer was God when He created humanity. God dares to dream the impossible dream – for us!

We often talk about believing in God and forget that God may also believe in us. We yell and scream and flaunt our wickedness before Him, refusing to believe in His amazing grace, but all at once we begin to wonder if perhaps it could be true. Could God love me after all, even when He sees what I really am? Is it possible that the Bible is for real when it says: "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8)?

And what about the verse that says, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends" (John 15:15)? We are calling ourselves failures while He is calling us friends. We are calling ourselves losers while He is calling us "my beloved." We are calling ourselves sinners while He is calling us saints.

Such knowledge, such assurance, should give us a new lease on life and a renewed confidence as we enter 2019. God loves doing a new thing within His people.

A new year is a good time to give other people a new chance. It is a time to also expect the best from them – to realize that perhaps with a little help and trust from you, they could be different. Give people a chance to begin over again with you.

Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert (Isaiah 43:19 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter