

# MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED!

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DECEMBER 1, 2019 / FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

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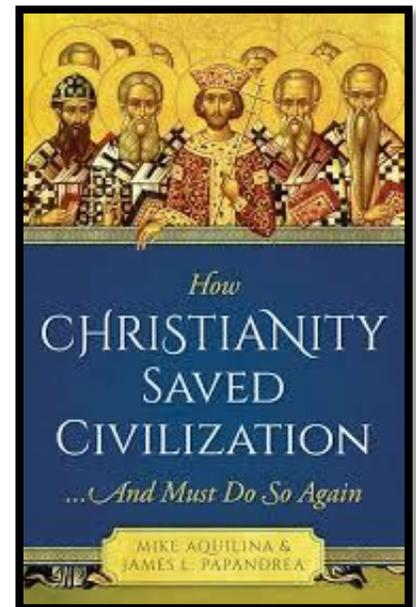
## SPIRITUAL PONDERINGS: How Christianity Saved Civilization... Part I

As we enter into the month of December we also enter into the season of Advent. Advent is a time in which we prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ into the world – God becoming Man. What we celebrate is not some mythological event but rather something that actually happen in history and had a profound impact on history. Authors Mike Aquilina and James Papandrea attempt to demonstrate to their readers that the impact of Christ is far more reaching than we realize. They point out in their book that Christ and His Mystical Body (the Catholic Church) has changed the world in seven ways. Over the month of December, I would like to explore these seven ways in which Christ and His Church changed the world. Quotes from their book, *How Christianity Saved Civilization... and Must Do So Again*, will be in bold and my commentary will be in normal font.

**The early church was nothing if not countercultural, to the extent that even slaves and former slaves could become bishops. As we present them here, the seven revolutions change the world by changing human relationships, an ever-widening concentric circles, beginning with the individual and extending outward to the world. A revolution of the individual affirm that all people are created equal, and the image of God, and no one is expendable. A revolution of the home affirmed as a place of safety and love, where women and children are not to be exploited. A revolution of the workplace affirmed the people are not property, but they must be free to choose their work, and that they must be given the free time to worship, for artistic expression, and for the enjoyment of their loved ones. A revolution of religion taught the world that God is love. A revolution of community taught people to love their neighbor. A revolution of the way people thought about life-and-death rejected the culture of death and affirm a culture of life and of hope, encouraging people to stand up for human rights. And finally, a revolution of government set of the ideal that rulers should serve those whom they rule (not the other way around), and it all people should enjoy freedom of religion. In short, these revolutions can be understood as cultural revolutions that promoted the protection of all human life and the protection of each person's dignity and freedom.**

I can still remember in grade school learning about computers on a Commodore 64. I knew that the invention of computers was going to change the world but I had no idea just how much they would. In the same way I can remember the "old brick" cell phone but I could never predict smart phones. The coming of a child always changes the world for the better. No one on that first Christmas would know how much the infant laying in a manger on Christmas day would change the world.

**Although it is easy to name instances in which Christians have not lived up to the ideals of the church, it only because of the church gave us those ideals that we cannot recognize and critique such human failures. In other words, without the precedents that Christianity established with regard to the protection of life, dignity, and freedom, we should have no standards by which to judge any person or group (including the church herself) fails to protect human rights.**



The dignity of the human person comes from the fact that we were created in God's image. Before we human beings learned this lesson from Jesus human beings were all utilitarians (base value on things by how useful they were.) Jesus also changed the way we looked at God. God was no longer some sort of super human being like Zeus who had to be appeased. Jesus reveals to us God is a being beyond our comprehension but who at His heart resembles more the loving Father in the Prodigal Son Story than any judge, emperor, or dictator.

**The Christian church was born in the Roman Empire. At that time, the "known world" was an empire that stretch from Spain to Israel and surrounded the Mediterranean Sea. Christianity emerged on the far eastern end of the umpire and spread all the way across to the Western end remarkably quickly, amid a wide range of diverse religions that were practiced in the vast region. Yet, as a religion, Christianity was different from anything that had come before it. In part, this is because the world had yet to see a religion that combined an open membership policy with strict moral expectations. Anyone was invited to join the church, but once a person joins, he was expected to make a serious commitment to changing his lifestyle.**

One of my favorite religious movies growing up was *The Robe*. The movie told the fictious story of a Roman soldier who was present when Christ died and won the "robe" that they played dice for in the Scriptures. The movie shows the great difference between the Emperor of Rome (who thought he was a god) and the followers of the Jewish Fisherman. Romans at the time of the early Church had a different set of morals and ideas than the followers of Christ. The fact that the Roman Empire would become Catholic ever definitely is a good argument that the Church was divinely instituted.

## BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

**December 1 2019 // First Sunday of Advent // Lectionary: 1 // Gospel MT 24:37-44**

Jesus said to his disciples: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

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**Spiritual Reflection:** Jesus in today's Gospel speaks to us a truth that I think can be summarized by the following quote: "I am not a product of my circumstances. I am a product of my decisions. - Stephen Covey



### Spiritual Questions:

1. How am I right now at the beginning of this new year of grace?
2. Has my faith life improved since last year? Why or why not?
3. Where would I like to be spiritually when I celebrate Christmas this year?
4. What does it mean to be fully alert and waiting for God?
5. What memory from the last year do you treasure the most?

## Thought of the Day

**Sunday:** Fittingly enough, Advent initiates this cycle with its clarion call week after week for a fuller grasp of an awareness of the divine, a vigil for the Lord's coming and to stay alert, lest the darkness overtake us.

**Monday:** "God comes to you more than you go to Him. Never will His coming be what you expect, and yet never will it disappoint. – Fulton Sheen.

**Tuesday:** "Our God is a God of Second Chances" – Fulton Sheen.

**Wednesday:** Let me recognize that Advent is not just a sentimental exercise but a true journey of conversion.

**Thursday:** Let the Crib and the Cross be our autobiography as well.



**Friday:** You might say that it was unjust of God to deprive us of friendship with him, and of these other gifts simply because Adam sinned. There would have been injustice if God deprived you of your due, but you are no more entitled to be a child of God than a razor has a right to bloom, or a rose has a right to bark, or a dog has the right to quote Dante. What Adam lost was gifts not heritage. – Fulton Sheen.

**Saturday:** Grant, O Lord, that I may ignore the tinsel and the dazzle of this season and, in anticipation and hope keep my eyes fixed on you. The precious jewel of my life. Grant me growth in your gift of goodness and give me eyes to truly see the lovability of all those I encounter.

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## PRO-LIFE



### December 2019

Heavenly Father, help us to stay awake and be ready to see the opportunities and chances to bring Your Son's love to those around us especially those who have wandered away from the your Church and no longer believe. May we be like John the Baptist and call people back to you in an effective way. We ask this through Christ our Lord . Amen.

### December 2019

Heavenly Father, please lift up the whole church, summoned again to wake from sleep, to throw off the works of darkness and to put on the armor of light that we may respond joyously to the call to be messengers of light and as we prepare to celebrate the birth of your Son, may we also proclaim the dignity of all life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen



## St. Monica Society

*Please join us in praying a special prayer each month for Catholics who have fallen away from their faith.*

## Catholic Prayers

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### ADVENT WREATH PRAYER

(The following are the Advent wreath prayers that change every week. They are prayed at the lighting of each candle every day during Advent.)

**Week One:** The first candle is lit, and the prayer for the first week is said.

Leader: Let us pray. Stir up Thy might, we beg Thee, O Lord, and come, so that we may escape through Thy protection and be saved by Thy help from the dangers that threaten us because of our sins. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

All: Amen.



**Week Two:** Two candles are lit on the second Sunday and allowed to burn as before. The prayer for the week is:

Leader: Let us pray. O Lord, stir up our hearts that we may prepare for Thy only begotten Son, that through His Coming we may be made worthy to serve Thee with pure souls. Through the same Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

**Week Three:** Three candles, including the rose candle, are lit on Gaudete, the third Sunday, and during that week. The following prayer is said:

Leader: Let us pray. We humbly beg Thee, O Lord, to listen to our prayers; and by the grace of Thy coming bring light into our darkened minds. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Week Four: All four candles are lit on the fourth Sunday and allowed to burn as before. The prayer said the fourth week is:

Leader: Let us pray. Stir up Thy might, we pray Thee, O Lord, and come; rescue us through Thy great strength so that salvation, which has been hindered by our sins, may be hastened by the grace of Thy gentle mercy. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

All: Amen.



## Humor

Q: How does a snowman get to work? A: By icicle