

MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED!

DECEMBER 8, 2019 / SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

SPIRITUAL PONDERINGS: How Christianity Saved Civilization... Part II

As we travel closer to Christmas this year through the season of Advent, I have felt it important to share with you some great insights into how Jesus Christ's first coming into the world on the first Christmas changed the world. To help us see how Christ truly impacted the world, I am sharing with you some reflections that I have had after reading authors Mike Aquilina and James Papandrea's book: ***How Christianity Saved Civilization... and Must Do So Again***. Quotes from their book will be in bold and my commentary will be in normal font.

First Revolution: The Individual/The Person

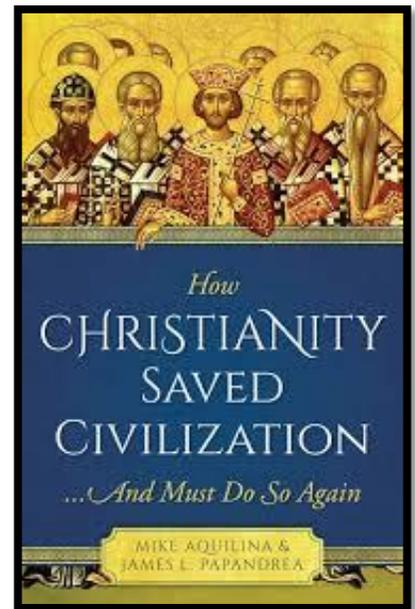
In the realm of the individual, the church revolutionized the way society define personhood. To affirm the universal dignity of human life requires the strong to speak up for and defend the weak, those who cannot speak for themselves. For some people in the ancient world, the ability to speak was a very litmus test of humanity. Those who could not speak (babies) and those who cannot speak the language of civilization (the "barbarians," who did not speak Greek or Latin) were considered less than fully human and were denied the benefits of society. One Roman writer said that because they cannot talk, babies were more like vegetables than like human beings. Yet from the very beginning, the church affirmed the value of all human life and resisted exploitation and dehumanization. Because of Christianity, this way of looking at humanity became so much a part of Western culture they eventually the Constitution of the United States would be built on the concept that all people are created equal (though this stipulation would not be applied to everyone at first). Long before the Constitution was applied equally to all people in this country, the Catholic Church had already condemned abortion, the abuse of children, and slavery.

Saint John Paul II in his Theology of the Body explained that love is a desire to want the best for the other person even if it requires a sacrifice on our part. This means that the opposite of love is not hate but rather objectification. Objectification meaning that we will use another person for own gratification even it means hurting them. Jesus was the first person to unite love of God with love of neighbor and love of self. Our society seems to be wanting to go back to the idea that certain people are objects or that you have to earn your value by what you produce.

"We are equally forbidden," wrote Tertullian, "to wish ill, to do ill, to speak ill, to think ill of everyone. The thing we must not do to an emperor, we must not do to anyone else."

In a world where slavery was forced to serve their masters and gladiators forced to fight for people's entertainment the Church began talking about loving others. The idea of treating a slave the same way a person would treat the emperor would have seemed totally foolish and absurd. There is no cast system within the Catholic Church. We believe God loves us all equally.

It takes a real effort of the imagination for us to see the world the way it was in ancient Rome. We have to abandon all our notions of equal rights under the law. In that day and age, there was only a small minority who



had rights – Roman Citizens.

In the ancient world, it was often the one with the most power got his way. There was no such thing as a “fair” trial by your peers. Roman Citizens could force their slaves to do anything they wanted them to do including prostitution work. Women and slaves could not be called as witnesses in a court of law. People’s value in the ancient world was dependent upon his or her usefulness to the state. Once you were no longer of any use to the state (or your family) you would be euthanized.

Some of the greatest lessons, I have learned in life have come from people who had terminal diagnosis. I also cannot imagine what life would be like wondering at all times when someone would consider me useless and have me killed legally.

A girl was a burden on her father. She could not get a job and contribute to the family’s wealth; instead she represented a colossal expense because she would require a dowry once she was of marriageable age. The Roman playwrights referred to female offspring as “odious daughters.”

When I read the above statement, it made me appreciate the Gospel stories of Jesus interacting with women all the more. Despite the fact that they were considered nobodies by society Jesus treats them all with respect.

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

December 8 2019 // Second Sunday of Advent // Lectionary: 4 // Gospel MT 3:1-12

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: *A voice of one crying out in the desert, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.* John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Spiritual Reflection: Saint Ambrose summarizes John the Baptist teaching: “True repentance is to cease from sin.”

Spiritual Questions:

1. How do I welcome people into my life?
2. How do I welcome people at Church?
3. How do I encounter God’s word day in and day out?
4. What drives me to despair? What leads me to hope?
5. If I was there listening to John the Baptist, what would his message be to me?



Thought of the Day

Sunday: As we turn to Isaiah for the announcement of God’s future, we might take note that the word of God serves us as a profound consolation in the midst of what may be the poverty of our desolation.

Monday: Mary is a model for all the virtues

Tuesday: The Christmas Message is not that peace will come automatically, because Christ is born in Bethlehem; that birth in Bethlehem was the prelude to His birth in our hearts by grace and faith and love. Peace belongs only to those who will have it. If there is not peace in the world today, it is not because Christ did not come; It is because we did not let Him in. – Fulton



Sheen.

Wednesday: Remind me often during this Advent season, O Lord Jesus, that you are the light that shines in the darkness. Have mercy on us, your children, and aid us in following the path of your light so that we may not perish but reach eternal life. As we are claimed by the outer signs of this season—the gifts, the family gatherings, the tree, the lights, and the decorations—let us discover in them the hope and faith of your coming—which is the true “magic of Christmas”

Thursday: There is really one shortcut to sanctity—the one Mary chose in the Visitation, the one our Lord chose in Gethsemane—abandonment to the Divine Will. – Fulton Sheen.

Friday: Arnold Toynbee speaks of three would-be saviors—the savior who believes in automatic progress; the savior with the sword who cannot sheathe it when he has cut his way to the throne; and the savior who tries to save the world with philosophical sayings. None of these Toynbee, can bring salvation: the only one who can save civilization is the Savior who saves us from our sins. Pointing to Christ he says, “There is the savior.” Yes, and there is Christmas—a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes. – Fulton Sheen.

Saturday: There are several ways to avoid loving God:

Deny that you are a sinner.

Pretend that religion is for the ignorant and the superstitious, but not for the truly learned such as yourself.

Insist that the sole purpose of religion is social service.

Judge religion by whether or not it is accepted by the “important” people of the world.

Avoid all contemplation, self-examination, and inquiry into the moral state of your soul. – Fulton Sheen

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.

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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

PRAYER TO THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

O God, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, did prepare a worthy dwelling place for Your Son, we beseech You that, as by the foreseen death of this, Your Son, You did preserve Her from all stain, so too You would permit us, purified through Her intercession, to come unto You. Through the same Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, world without end. Amen.



1. What time is it when little white flakes fall past the classroom window?
Snow and Tell.

2. What is a mountains favorite type of candy?
Snow caps.

3. What is it called when a snowman has a temper tantrum?
A meltdown!

4. What do you call a snowman with a six pack?
An abdominal snowman.

5. What do you call a snowman that tells tall tales?
A snow-fake!