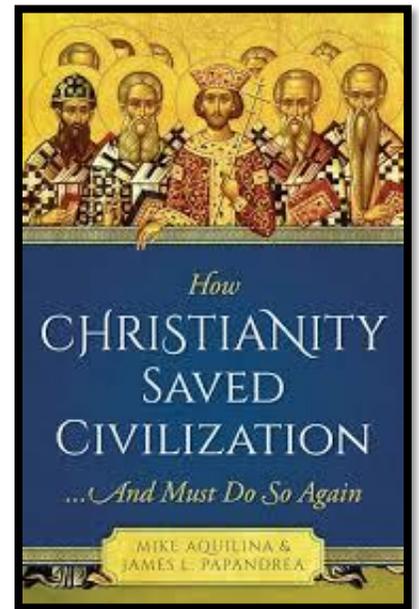


MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED!

DECEMBER 22, 2019 / FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

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

In the movie *It's a Wonderful Life* starring James Stewart, George Bailey discovers what life would be like if he had never been born. Have you ever wondered what the world would be like without the birth of Christ? What if there was no Christianity? Mike Aquilina and James Papandrea's book: ***How Christianity Saved Civilization... and Must Do So Again*** can help us not only imagine what the world would be like without Christianity but can also help us grow in a deeper appreciation of how much the Catholic Church has changed the world for the better. Quotes from their book will be in bold and my commentary will be in normal font.



Second Revolution: The Home

Love is seldom part of the vocabulary when pagans talk about the family. They speak of duty but not of love. The pagan family was the smallest unit of the state, and it was really more a form of government the relationship of love.

Catholics speak of marriage a Covenant and not a contract. A Covenant is a ritual blessed by God that creates a kinship (a bond). A contract however is where two people come together and agree to exchange goods. Covenants cannot be undone but contracts can elapse or be reneged on. The Church says that the family is also a “domestic Church” and not a small state.

For Christians, God himself as a loving family. The father loves the son; the son is obedient to the father out of love. The love shared by the father and the son is the Holy Spirit. The pagan gods had families, too. But we certainly don't look for love and their relationships.

The word that Christians used to describe the inner-working of the Trinity is “Kenosis”. The word Kenosis means “pouring out.” The Father pours himself out into the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son pours himself out into the Father and the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit pours himself out into the Father and the Son. They hold nothing back. There is no selfishness found in the Blessed Trinity. The families of the pagan gods were all about selfishness. We model our families after God and the pagans model gods after our families.

Common vases, lamps, and jewelry were festooned with the most shockingly obscene images. The walls of Pompeii – their lurid details preserved by the ashes from the Vesuvius – show us that those little household objects were the tip of the iceberg. The decorations in the homes of the middle class were little different what can be found in the common rooms of the brothels. Often the images received from pagan mythology, the amorous adventures of God's and demigods; they were both pornographic and religious at the same time.

Pornography always encourages us to look at other people as objects and not as individuals. It encourages us value people based on what they could do for us. When we value some people that way, we are more likely to begin to value other people in the same way and people will begin to assume that you value them based on what they can do for them.

With limitless leisure time and no supervision, teenage boys roam the streets in gangs. They pass time and mischief, random sexual activities, and, now and then, raping a prostitute. The prostitute was a girl, she might have been in a brothel because she had been rescued from a dunghill when she was a baby. (Christians and pimps were the only people likely to rescue an abandoned girl, though they did so with very different motivations.) She might be very young, because having invested in feeding and caring for her, the pimp would want to start making a profit as soon as possible.

Christians once again through action saved life and promoted dignity of all people. Christians treated everyone with respect even when others did not.

Meanwhile, the girls who did grow up at home – and by the end of the first century A.D., they were in short supply were married off very young. Custom dictated that the girl's father had to pay a substantial, sometimes ruinous, dowry to the groom for taking her off his hands. Girl suffered misery on two fronts: the groom was very often interested in the money his bride would bring with her then and the bride herself; and the father to think of his daughter only in terms of the Fortune she was costing him.

December 22 2019 // Fourth Sunday of Advent // Lectionary: 10 // Gospel MT 1:18-24

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: *Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel*, which means "God is with us." When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

Spiritual Reflection: "As mariners are guided into port by the shining of a star, so Christians are guided to heaven by Mary." - Thomas Aquinas. The Blessed Virgin Mary is the example of what it means to be a true co-worker with God.

Spiritual Questions:

1. How bold am I in my prayer?
2. When I sense the nearness of God, do I feel further encouraged?
3. When I sense the nearness of God, do I feel fear?
4. When was the last time I felt called to do something for the Church?
5. What would it look like for me to be God's servant without hesitation?



Thought of the Day

Sunday: Why me, I'm just a simple man of trade ∞ Why Him with all the rulers in the world ∞ Why here inside this stable filled with hay ∞ Why her, she's just an ordinary girl ∞ Now I'm not one to second guess ∞ What angels have to say ∞ But this is such a strange way to save the World = Lyrics from the Song "What a Strange Way to Save the World" by 4 Him

Monday: . "To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment." — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Tuesday: If you were composing a song about your life how many verses would be about what you did for God and how much would it be about what God has done for you?

Wednesday: Blessed Christmas

Thursday: Wherever it pleases God to put man in this world, the Christian must be ready for martyrdom and death. It is only in this way that man learns faith. - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Friday: Opposite of Love – Objectification

Saturday: *Holy Innocents of Bethlehem, you died unnamed at the hands of a madman. May your pristine souls, washed in blood, give hope to all who suffer unjustly that one day their sacrifice will be rewarded with triumph, if not for themselves, then for those who follow.*



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

Christmas William Arthur Ward
Christmas is more than a time of music, merriment and mirth;
it is a season of meditation, managers and miracles.
Christmas is more than a time of gaiety, greenery and gifts;
it is a season of wonder, worship and wisemen.
Christmas is more than a time of tinsel, trees and toys;
it is a season of preparation, prayers and peace.
Christmas is more than a time of festivities, family and friends;
it is a season of generosity, gladness and gratitude.
Christmas is more than a time of carols, cards and candy;
it is a season of dedication, direction and decision.
Christmas is more than Santa, stockings and surprises;
it is Christ, care and concern



Humor

1. Why did Frosty ask for a divorce? - His wife was a total flake.
2. Why does Scrooge love reindeer so much? - Because every single buck is dear to him!
3. What do you get when you cross a duck with Santa? - A Christmas quacker.
4. What's Santa's favorite snack food? - Crisp Pringles.
5. Why do mummies like Christmas so much? - They're into all the wrapping.