

MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED!

JANUARY 5, 2020 / EPIPHANY

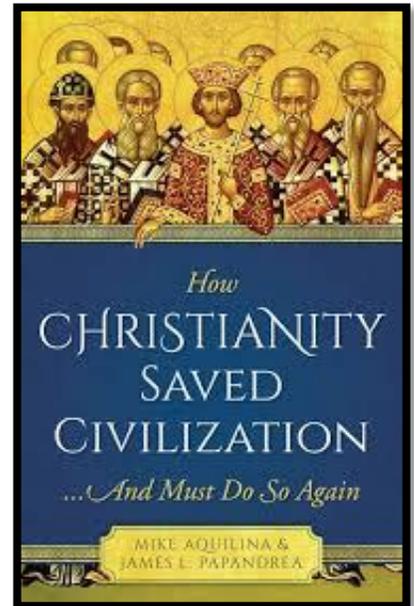
SPIRITUAL PONDERINGS: How Christianity Saved Civilization... Part VI

As we enter into the month of January and a new civil year, I am going to continue my reflections that are guided by Mike Aquilina and James Papandrea's book: ***How Christianity Saved Civilization... and Must Do So Again***. Please join me on reflecting on the idea of how Christ's message spread through His Church has ganged the world. Quotes from their book will be in bold and my commentary will be in normal font.

Revolution #3 The Work Place

In the realm of what we might call the workplace, Christianity emphasized the dignity of human labor. Based on the assumed value of the individual person, the church affirmed the honor and manual labor and eventually rid the world of the belief that one person could own another.

Two of the men that I admired the most were Red and Norm. They were friends of my grandmother and active members of my parish growing up. What I admired most about them was their willingness to pitch in and do whatever needed to get done. Norm and Red were comfortable and happy being chairmen of events and they were comfortable and happy being dishwashers. Work (manual labor) for Red and Norm was simply an opportunity to show others that they cared.



In the ancient world the taking of slaves was normally the result of conquest. When Rome conquered the Mediterranean world, the losing sides became slaves. The children of slaves were also slaves, so, in time the slave population grew to be enormous. In some rural districts, almost everyone who worked on the giant factory farms was a slave. No one knows how many people in their empire were slaves, but in Italy, where many of the slaves were sent after Rome's numerous victories, slaves probably composed at least a third of the population.

In Paul's letter to Philemon St. Paul writes to Philemon and asks him to release Onesimus (a slave that Philemon has lent to Paul during his house arrest. Paul proclaims that he could demand Philemon to do so but he would rather Philemon do so out of the goodness of his heart and for the love of God and Paul. St. Luke willing became a slave to Paul during Paul's imprisonment in order to learn the Gospel for St. Paul.

That is much as can be said in favor of the lot of the slave. For the most part, the life of a slave was miserable. Legally a slave was property---a thing, not a person. A slave owner could beat or torture his slave for any reason or for no reason at all. If he decided the slave deserved to die, no one would stop him from destroying valuable property, but they would not think he had committed a crime. He could rape any of his slaves without consequence, and the slave had no right to complain; a well-to-do gentleman might buy a certain number of attractive slaves for that purpose. Under a particular bizarre twist of the law, the testimony of a slave was not valid in court of law unless the slave had been tortured first. The slaves who worked on the giant factory farms often died from ill treatment; it was cheaper for owners to buy new slaves than to provide decent living conditions for their slaves.

Slavery or treating people as objects is what will inevitably happen when human life is not respected at all its stages. If a person's value comes from what he or she produces and not because he or she is a child of God, our society is doomed.

The pagans thought work was for the servile class and leisure was for the upper crust. The Christian thought that both work and leisure were necessary for everyone.

One of the ways that the Church promoted human dignity by promoting the value of work was by emphasizing the Sabbath Day. This is one of the reasons why I feel Sunday Mass is so important. The Mass helps us realize that our value does not come from what we are doing because from the world's point of view we are doing nothing. The Mass teaches us that our value comes from who God created us to be – His sons and daughters. Our God loves us even when we are sitting around doing nothing.

But there was one enormous difference. Monks were not men of leisure. True, they made time to pray throughout the day, but even the best-educated among them also had to dig ditches, plant crops, grind flour, or copy manuscripts. There were no class distinctions among the monks, no men who were set apart for a life of leisure on the grounds that they were presumed to be superior to the laboring herd. The proof that a monk was striving after holiness, that he was developing as far as it was possible for a human being to develop, was that he was working hard.

The faithful medieval monk is a prime example of faith in practice and how valuing work reshaped culture. Compare St. Benedict's ideas of work to the ideas of Augustus Caesar.

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

January 5 2020 // The Epiphany of the Lord // Lectionary: 20 // Gospel MT 2:1-12

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: *And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.*" Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

Spiritual Reflection: The Magi arrive honestly seeking the truth about Jesus' birth. While King Herod has no idea who this king is and where he is to be born, the Magi come bearing gifts for the newborn king. Herod sends his army with drawn swords to murder the upstart king. The magi bow down and adore him. Herod turns his back and thinks only of ways to protect his own power and authority.

Spiritual Questions:

1. How are you like Herod?
2. How are you like the magi?
3. What would you offer God today?
4. What has God warned you to stay away from?
5. Do you return home from Mass a different person?



Thought of the Day

Sunday: The first words spoken in today's gospel are among the most important we will hear in scripture all year. What sounds like a simple question, in fact, could be one of the most challenging statements any of us will encounter.

"Where is the newborn King of the Jews?"

Put another way: Where do we find Christ?

Monday: "Everything in discernment of spirits is directed toward action: toward firmly accepting what is of God and equally firmly rejecting what is not." — Timothy M. Gallagher

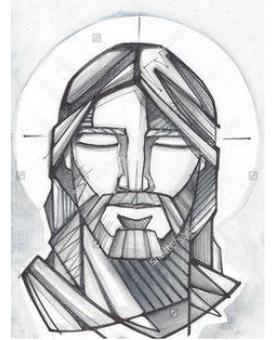
Tuesday: There is nothing so great as the Eucharist. If God had something more precious, He would have given it to us. - John Vianney

Wednesday: I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear. - Nelson Mandela

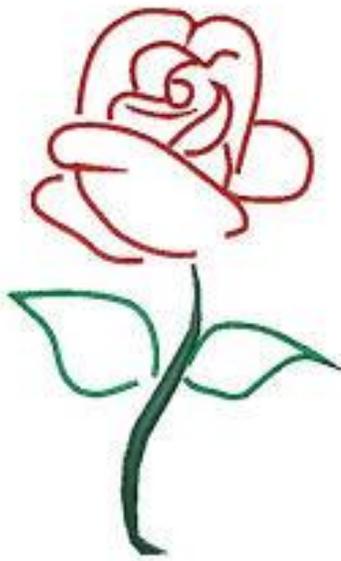
Thursday: Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless. - Mother Teresa

Friday: We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them. - Albert Einstein

Saturday: When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves. - Viktor E. Frankl



PRO-LIFE



January 2020

By John Paul II

Eternal and merciful Father, I give you thanks for the gift of Your Divine Son who suffered, died and rose from the dead for all people. I thank You also for my Catholic Faith and ask Your help that I may grow in fidelity by prayer, by works of charity, and by Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

Prayer for Those Who have Lost a Child to Abortion by Fr. Frank Pavone

Lord of all Life, You have entrusted us to the care of one another, And called us to be one Body in Christ. You call us to rejoice with those who rejoice, And to weep with those who weep. Hear our prayer today

For our brothers and sisters who have lost children to abortion. Help us to understand the pain that is in their hearts, And to be a living sign to them Of your welcome, your mercy, and your healing.

Help them to undergo with courage The process of grief and the journey of healing. Never allow them to feel alone; Always refresh them with the presence of Your Spirit And of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Console them with the sure hope that you love and care for their children. Give them new strength, That even while they grieve what they have lost, They may look forward to all the good That you still have in store for them.

Lord of healing and hope, Give us all the forgiveness of our sins, And the joy of your salvation. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.



St. Monica Society

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

January 2020

Inspired by confidence in Your power to move hearts and by the success of prayer, I pray for (N) who no longer share(s) in the intimate life of your

Catholic family. Grant through my prayer and witness that (she/he/they) may be open to the promptings of the HOLY SPIRIT to return to the loving union with Your people. Grant also that my prayer be ever hopeful and that I may never judge another, for You alone can read hearts. I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Catholic Prayers



THE PRAYER, MAJESTIC QUEEN OF HEAVEN

Majestic Queen of Heaven and Mistress of the Angels, thou didst receive from God the power and commission to crush the head of Satan; wherefore we humbly beseech thee, send forth the legions of heaven, that, under thy command, they may seek out all evil spirits, engage them everywhere in battle, curb their insolence, and hurl them back into the pit of hell. "Who is like unto God?"

O good and tender Mother, thou shalt ever be our hope and the object of our love.

O Mother of God, send forth the holy Angels to defend me and drive far from me the cruel foe.

Holy Angels and Archangels, defend us and keep us.



Humor

Actual Announcements from Church Bulletins

- Coming Up—Theological Open House. We discuss thought-provoking topics. Your opinions are hardly welcome.
- All singles are invited to join us Friday at 7 p.m. for the annual Christmas Sing-alone."
- Thursday night – potluck supper. Prayer and medication to follow.
- Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our church and the community.
- For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.