

# MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED!

JANUARY 12, 2020 / BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

## Spiritual Ponderings:

How Christianity Saved Civilization... Part VII

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.

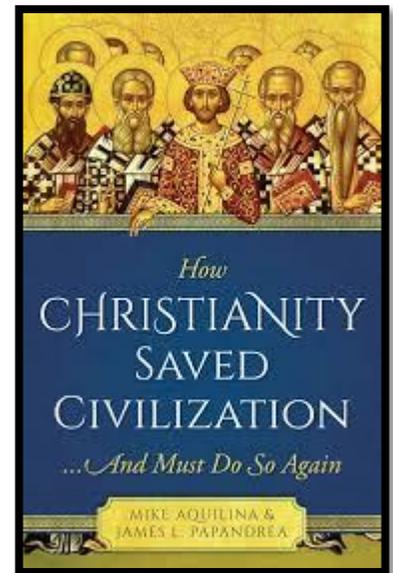
Revolution #4 Religion

**In the realm of religion, the church to find herself, and, by extension, religion in general. Christianity redefined what it meant for humanity to connect with the divine, and in the process, it taught that God is love, and union with God is open to all persons. Thus, the church recognized, in the course of her struggle to find herself, the importance of inclusiveness and the value of unity.**

I believe that I am like most modern day Catholics and so I assume all of us run into the problem of somedays forgetting to be Catholic and instead practicing my faith in a pagan way. The pagan theology of the time presupposed that there were certain deities (super human beings) that controlled the weather, animals, etc. If you made these deities mad then they would punish you with a plaque and if you made them happy then they would shower blessings upon you. Personally, I know that God does not punish me (my punishment is the evil I cause by turning away from God who is Love. I do find myself time and time again asking myself "what did I do to upset God?" when bad things happen to me despite knowing that this is not what my faith professes. I have to stop myself and redirect my thoughts to "what is God trying to teach me by allowing this situation to take place?" We sometime do this with others. When someone gets hurt we may think to ourselves, "Wow, what did she do to deserve that?" despite knowing that God does not work that way.

**This Church that Jesus founded with his apostles was a revolution of religion in three important ways. First, Christianity redefined the way humans related to the Diving. The relationship between Greeks and Romans and their gods was a relationship of patronage, in which the people hoped to please their gods enough to receive protection and blessings. The Hebrew people, the nation of Israel, were in a covenant relationship with their God, and they were expected to remain faithful to God to avoid the consequence of infidelity and to live a life of blessing. But Christians entered into a relationship with their God as individuals responding to an offer of forgiveness, which is, at its heart, God taking the initiative to reach out to people in mercy and compassion. Those individuals who respond to God's invitation are then gathered into a community of mutual care and support, and they reflect the grace they received from God to one another. In the Christian faith, God is not only the transcendent Creator and Judge; He is also relational---up close and personal, and intimately involved in the lives of people and their relationships. God cares about people. God is love (1 John 4:7-21).**

Our faith is a faith that is both individualistic and communitarian at the same time. We are meant to be saved as a



community and so the Church emphasizes community throughout its liturgies especially in the Sacraments.

I am also extremely glad that I do not live under a patronage program with God. I am glad instead that our God is a merciful God who really cares for us as individuals.

What a revolution of thought it was when Christians started thinking of "being like God is being all lovable instead of being like God as being all powerful.

**Second Christianity redefined the way humans understand God. For the Greeks and Romans, there were many gods, and demigods or other being who were quasi divine. For the Hebrews, there was one God, but direct contact with Him was rare and reserved for a select few. For Christians, the one God can be known in Jesus Christ and is present in the Holy Spirit... Because God is love, God had reached out to humanity by extending Himself into the created world and the human realm.**

Sometimes, I think we, human beings, take it too lightly that God became one of us. This would be like the President of the United States become a private in the Army.

## BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

**January 12 2020 // The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord // Lectionary: 21 // Gospel MT 3:13-17**

Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

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**Spiritual Reflection:** Baptism is an amazing crucial sacrament that open heaven's door to everlasting life... Everyone beams with delight applause. This is why Christ chooses to be baptized by John. It is not solely to link Jesus with John, but to link Jesus with each beautiful act of baptism.

### Spiritual Questions:

1. What is your reaction to seeing that a Baptism is going to take place at the Mass you are at?
2. What do you understand about the Sacrament of Baptism?
3. Why was Baptism the first thing Jesus did?
4. What are the obligations of someone who has been baptized?
5. How can you grow in your appreciation of baptism?



## Thought of the Day

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| <b>Sunday</b>    | "Do not be afraid of holiness. It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy." – Pope Francis  |
| <b>Monday</b>    | God calls you to make definitive choices, and He has a plan for each of you: to discover that plan and to respond to your vocation is to move toward personal fulfillment. - Pope Francis   |
| <b>Tuesday</b>   | It matters little what form of prayer we adopt or how many words we use. What matters is the faith which lays hold on God, knowing that He knows our needs before we even ask Him. That is what gives Christian prayer its boundless confidence and its joyous certainty. - Dietrich Bonhoeffer |
| <b>Wednesday</b> | Think of your discernment as a journey in which you will grow personally and closer to God. The best discernments aren't rushed, but lived in openness and surrender to God.  |
| <b>Thursday</b>  | One act of obedience is better than one hundred sermons. - Dietrich Bonhoeffer  |

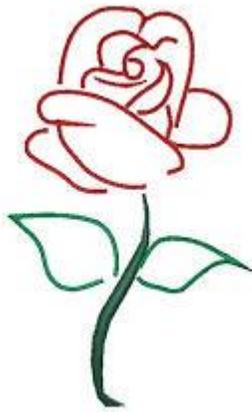
**Friday**

St. Augustine said that we've forgiven someone when we've surrendered our natural desire for revenge. Forgiveness doesn't mean pretending it never happened or letting the person go scot free. It means surrendering your desire to hurt the other person or have them hurt for having hurt you.

**Saturday**

I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else. - C. S. Lewis

## PRO-LIFE



**January 2020**

### 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.

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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.

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.



## St. Monica Society

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

*January 2020*

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## Catholic Prayers

THE PRAYER LOOK UPON THE FACE

O Almighty and Eternal God, look upon the Face of Thy Son Jesus. We present It to Thee with confidence to implore Thy pardon. The All-Merciful Advocate opens His mouth to plead our cause; hearken to His cries, behold His tears, O God, and through His infinite merits hearken to Him when He intercedes for us poor miserable sinners. Amen.

#### **PRAYER FOR TRUST**

O Christ Jesus, when all is darkness and we feel our weakness and helplessness, give us the sense of Your presence, Your love, and Your strength. Help us to have perfect trust in Your protecting love and strengthening power, so that nothing may frighten or worry us, for, living close to You, we shall see Your hand, Your purpose, Your will through all things. (By St. Ignatius of Loyola, 1491-1556)



## Humor

There was a preacher who fell in the ocean and he couldn't swim. When a boat came by, the captain yelled, "Do you need help, sir?" The preacher calmly said "No, God will save me." A little later, another boat came by and a fisherman asked, "Hey, do you need help?" The preacher replied again, "No God will save me." Eventually the preacher drowned & went to heaven. The preacher asked God, "Why didn't you save me?" God replied, "Fool, I sent you two boats!"