

MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED!

JANUARY 19, 2020 / 2ND SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Spiritual Ponderings:

How Christianity Saved Civilization... Part VIII

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 Continued

Third, the understanding of God as a Trinity of three divine persons, but also God's is in relationship with humanity but also that God is internally relational, that divine love is constantly being shared among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that this loving relationship has existed since long before humans entered the picture.

Thinking of God as a loving Father like Jesus reveals him to be is much more amazing than thinking of God as a supreme military general.

Before Christianity, religion was a service contract. For the most part, ancient religion entailed people serving various gods (usually by ritual sacrifice) so that the gods would protect people or grant them blessings—in effect, religion meant doing whatever it was believed would coax or motivate the gods to do the people's will.

When I sit down and pray at night, I try to focus on praying (enter into a relationship with God) and not witchcraft (trying to manipulate God.) I want God to help me because we are friends and not because He owes me. (God has done so much for me that I will be able to place God in my debt).

To make things more difficult, the multiple gods could be at odds, and sometimes a person had guessed which side they should be on. Trying to outcome the influence the outcome of a war became more a matter of praying to the more powerful god than putting together the more powerful army.

"Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right." - Abraham Lincoln

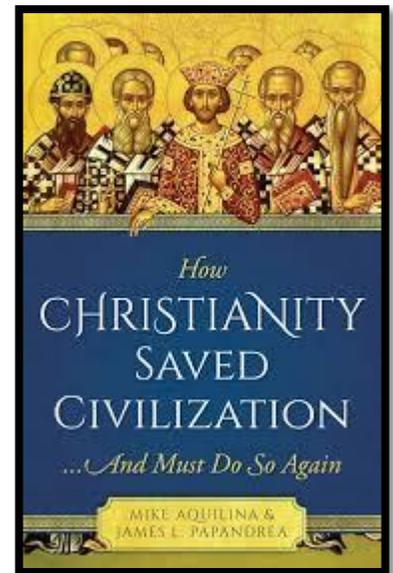
What made Christianity revolutionary was that it was more than a service contract; it was a relationship with the Divine.

"Mic drop!" God wants to be in a relationship with you and me.

Revolution # 5 – Community

In our world, the word religion implies standards for behavior in everyday life. In the Greco-Roman world, it did not have.

The authors of our book spend a lot of time talking about how religion focused more on duty to the state than it did to



everyday life behind closed door. A person practiced his or her faith in public in order to appease the god who was patronizing the city. As long as one's sins were not to public no one cared. A person could be considered a religious person if he or she fulfilled their religious obligations of offering sacrifices despite being a rapist and murderer behind closed doors.

In the Roma community, Christians looked outward from the church and care for the poor and the sick, regardless of their religion. The concept of Christian charity was something alien to the self-centered perspective of Roman culture, yet by the end of the fourth century Christian charity had replaced Greco – Roman virtue as the goal of human progress.

In the Roman religion there was no concern for the poor and there was no altruistic demands. A person could remain as selfish as he or she wanted to. People gave to the poor only to keep them at a distance or keep them from rioting.

Following Jesus's lead, the Church has always insisted that we respond to the love of God by loving our neighbor.
How weird the early Christians must have been to others?

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

January 26 2020 // 3rd Sun. in Ordinary Time // Lectionary: 67 // Gospel MT 4:12-23 OR 4:12-17

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: *Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen.* From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him. He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people.



Spiritual Reflection:

Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. - Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Jesus does not do ministry alone. He does it always in the midst of community.

Spiritual Questions:

1. Have you ever experienced a conversion of the heart?
 2. What do you need to repent of right now?
 3. When is the last time you considered the Cross you now carry?
 4. Why do you think Christianity started in Galilee?
 5. Can you see points in your life that point toward an ongoing conversion in your life?
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Thought of the Day

Sunday

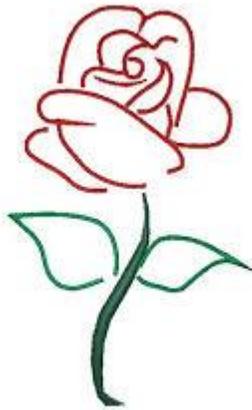
A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you. - C. S. Lewis

Monday

Obedience unites us so closely to God that it in a way transforms us into Him, so that we have no other will but His. If obedience is lacking, even prayer cannot be pleasing to God. - Thomas Aquinas

- Tuesday** 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
- Wednesday** Being a Christian is less about cautiously avoiding sin than about courageously and actively doing God's will. - Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- Thursday** David was catapulted to fame and acclaim after he successfully killed Goliath, the Philistine giant before whom the entire Israelite camp cowered, with a mere slingshot and five smooth stones. Even King Saul tried to dissuade David, claiming that he was too young to take on such a seasoned warrior. David was the only one to realize that even the greatest of men can be felled by a well-aimed stone, and that no one is stronger than G-d. In David's own words to Goliath: "You come to me with a sword, spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of G-d Almighty, the G-d of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."
- Friday** There are times when circumstances present us with opportunities to take revenge against those who may have wronged us, and it can be tempting to take them. But, like David, we can take the high road. We may lose the battle, but we win the war of morality.
- Saturday** Life's deepest meaning is not found in accomplishments, but in relationships - Gary Chapman

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.

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

Catholic Prayers

DAILY PRAYER TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS # 1

Sacred Heart of Jesus today I wish to live in You, in Your grace, in which I desire at all costs to persevere. Keep me from sin and strengthen my will by helping me to keep watch over my senses, my imagination, and my heart. Help me to correct my faults which are the source of sin. I beg You to do this, O Jesus, through Mary, Your Immaculate Mother.

DAILY PRAYER TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS # 2

O God, Who dost deign mercifully to bestow upon us infinite treasures of love in the Heart of Thy Son, which was wounded for our sins; grant, we beseech Thee, that we who pay Him the devout homage of our piety, may in like manner show unto Thee our due of worthy satisfaction. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.



Humor

Bulletin bloopers.

1. Due to the Rector's illness, Wednesday's healing services will be discontinued until further notice.
2. Bertha Belch, a missionary from Africa, will be speaking tonight at Calvary Methodist. Come hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa.
3. The Rev. Merriwether spoke briefly, much to the delight of the audience.
4. On a church bulletin during the minister's illness: GOD IS GOOD; Dr. Hargreaves is better.
5. Applications are now being accepted for 2 year-old nursery workers.
6. The pastor will preach his farewell message, after which the choir will sing, "Break Forth Into Joy."
7. If you would like to make a donation, fill out a form, enclose a check, and drip in the collection basket.
8. Next Sunday Mrs. Vinson will be soloist for the morning service. The pastor will then speak on "It's a Terrible Experience."
9. Don't miss this Saturday's exhibit by Christian Martian Arts.
10. We are grateful for the help of those who cleaned up the grounds around the church building and the rector.