

MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED!

JANUARY 26, 2020 / 3RD SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Spiritual Ponderings:

How Christianity Saved Civilization... Part IX

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 #6: Death

We believe in the resurrection—not just the immortality of the soul but also the resurrection of the body. That idea marked the difference between the Christians and their pagan neighbors.

I think we all saw this one coming because after all the Resurrection is one of the major points of Christianity. I did not know how much it separated us until I read further.

In the realm of ultimate concerns, Christianity influenced attitudes towards life and death, not to mention belief in the afterlife. And by doing so, Christians further promoted a culture of life. The culture of life (and eternal life) gave people the hope they desperately needed, which led to the freedom to rise above the daily grind it even to express their God – given creativity through art.

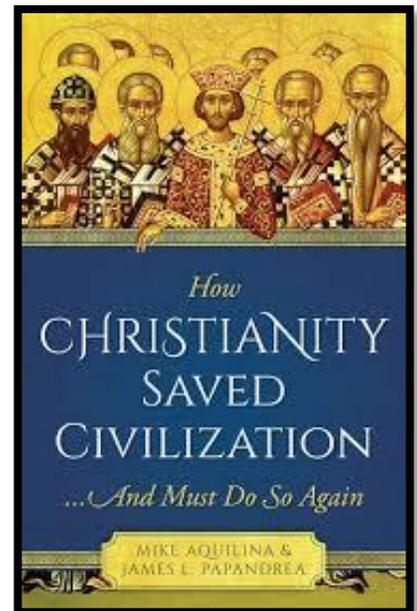
Hope, that this world is not all there is, continues to inspire us rise above the daily grind

A dead body was something a pagan didn't want to think about. The mere sight of a corpse made a pagan ritually unclean, not to mention giving him the willies. Yet Christians treated dead bodies as though they were worth something—as though they were still somehow connected to the honored dead, not just a cast-off container for souls.

Catholicism has never devalued the human body and has always done its best to show this physical container respect because it alone could make our spiritual soul visible.

Revolution #7 State/Government

Finally, in the realm of the state, the church revolutionized government. Beginning with Constantine, Ambrose admitted not only that they were not gods but also, they were not above the law and were morally accountable to God. Although some, like Constantine, consider the postponement of baptism a loophole in the system, the fact they thought they had the postponement baptisms to avoid accountability proves the point. There was a higher power, and authority over the Emperor, one who had behavioral expectations for the Emperor, and one who could remove the Emperor from the throne to be did not measure up. With all of the seven revolutions in mind, it is indeed remarkable that the church, born of oppression in the Roman Empire, would be the entity that brought hope to the world.



The focus in the Pre-Christian world was maintaining the state (government) at all cost. This was what made Christianity so dangerous. People were putting their faith in front of their duty to the state. The fact that so many Christians chose to give up their lives and be tortured and killed than to submit to the state religion was both amazing and evangelizing.

Before the time of Constantine, no society in the world had ever had anything like religious freedom.

When Constantine converted to Catholicism he first legalized Christianity. He did not make it the state religion. Another Emperor would come and do that. Most Church Fathers felt “forced” conversions were of no use and should be avoided.

By the time the Church was in a position to influence government in the fourth century, a Christian idea of government had emerged – that those who governed should be the protectors of those whom they govern. Leadership was not a right; it was a responsibility—one that included serving the “least” of society. To govern was to be entrusted with something very valuable –human beings created in the image of God and the resources that sustain them. In other words Christian leadership is a form of stewardship.

Whenever the Church (or world) forgets this bad things happen. Leadership should never be seen as a way of earning God’s love or prestige. It should always be about serving 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?



Thought of the Day

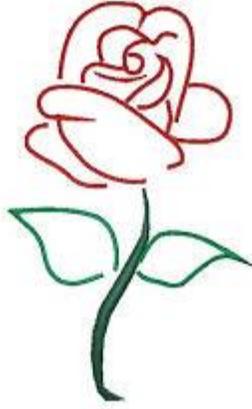
- Sunday *Vocation* comes from the Latin word, *vocare*, “to call.” It is a calling, a calling from God, who made us, loves us, and has a plan for us.
- Monday Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil. - C. S. Lewis
- Tuesday The best measure of a spiritual life is not its ecstasies but its obedience. - Oswald Chambers
- Wednesday After David acted improperly with Bathsheba (and had her husband, Uriah, killed), Nathan told David about a rich man who stole a poor man’s sheep as a way of demonstrating how wrong the king had been to take Bathsheba from her husband. The king humbly accepted the prophet’s criticism and admitted that he had sinned. This stands in stark contrast with the behavior of his predecessor Saul, who repeatedly denied his wrongdoing to the Prophet Samuel.
- Thursday Like David, we must recognize when we mess up, ask for forgiveness, and try to do better
- Friday There is a time for prayer, a time for mourning, and a time to resume living.
- Saturday Avoid the near occasion of sin
- Friday If our Christianity has ceased to be serious about discipleship, if we have watered down the gospel into emotional uplift which makes no costly demands and which fails to distinguish between natural and Christian existence, then we cannot help regarding the cross as an ordinary everyday calamity, as one of the trials and tribulations of life. We have then forgotten that the cross means rejection and shame as well as suffering. - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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

PRO-LIFE

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



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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.

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Catholic Prayers

NOVENA FOR CHILDREN AWAITING ADOPTION

1) Repeat the following Novena prayers every day for 9 consecutive days.

Lord Jesus, You saw in the innocence of children the attributes which make us worthy of heaven - trust, joy, humility, obedience and faithfulness. Bless all the children who are awaiting adoption. They seek love - may they find it in loving parents. They seek stability - may they find a home rooted in faith. They seek acceptance - may their gifts be recognized and nurtured. And may they always know your steadfast love for them and the true joy of loving you. Amen.

2) Petition to St. Joseph

Blessed St. Joseph, You welcomed the Christ Child into your home, provided for his daily needs, and helped him to grow in wisdom, age and grace. Hear the prayers of all children who are awaiting a loving home, and intercede for them before your adopted Son and Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. St. Joseph, Guardian and Protector, Pray for us.

3) CONCLUDING PRAYERS

Say 1 Our Father...

Say 1 Hail Mary...

Say 1 Glory Be...



Humor

Bulletin bloopers.

1. A worm welcome to all who have come today.
2. Barbara remains in the hospital and needs blood donors for more transfusions. She is also having trouble sleeping and requests tapes of Pastor Nelson's sermons.
3. During the absence of our pastor, we enjoyed the rare privilege of hearing a good sermon when J.F. Stubbs supplied our pulpit.
4. Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.
5. The ushers will come forward and take our ties and offerings.
6. The rosebud on the altar this morning is to announce the birth of David Alan Belzer, the son of Reverend and Mrs. Julius Belzer.
7. The eighth-graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the church basement on Friday at 7 p.m. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.
8. Don't let worry kill you off – let the church help.
9. Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person(s) you want remembered.
10. Let us join David and Lisa in the celebration of their wedding and bring their happiness to a conclusion.