



IMMACULATE HEART^{OF} MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR AUGUST 30, 2020

Dear friends in the Lord,

O.K. I tried Facebook again. I really did. But last night I cancelled my account. Again. And it felt like a tremendous burden was lifted.

I had great hopes for Facebook years ago. It promised to be a wonderful tool for staying in touch with distant family—and for evangelization. At first it was fascinating to receive “friend requests” from long-lost high school and college classmates, and from people I’d known in parishes through the years.

But the friend requests began coming in faster than I could keep up with them. Some nights there were more than an hundred awaiting my Solomonian judgment: to “friend” or to “ignore”? (It’s not that I got that many requests; it’s just that I could never click “ignore;” it seemed so rude.) And then there was the occasional rebuke: “Father why is so-and-so your Facebook friend, but I’m not?” It was the social anxiety of middle school all over again!

The wonderful Betty White captured my attitude about Facebook perfectly in her hilarious monologue at the opening of her Saturday Night Live appearance several years ago. She remarked with mock innocence about Facebook: “It sounds like a huge waste of time to me!” Don’t get me wrong: I’m in awe of people who are such great time managers that they can accomplish their work with distinction, tend to their families with devotion and still have time left over to post an update so the world will know where they’re having lunch.

But as has happened every four years around this time, it’s the election season that pushed me over the edge. No political party represents the Gospels and the Catholic tradition perfectly; every political decision requires the virtue of prudence operating within a well-formed conscience. We vote for candidates *despite* their positions that are inconsistent with Catholic faith, hoping nonetheless to promote the common good.

But when I see people I otherwise love and respect embracing one candidate or another precisely for reasons that would bring Jesus to tears, it discourages me beyond words. Some of my more zealous priest friends relish the opportunity to engage in online debates in those situations. I just don’t have the heart for it. The tactics and language of many political posts are corrosive, and the notion of truth itself has lost its footing, so authentic debate becomes almost impossible in this context.

No, I’m satisfied that the hour catching up on social media every night will be better spent praying. Please know that I’m always praying for you.