

So, here's some insight into the world my thoughts inhabit. Warning!!!, saintly older folks and small children should not read this post. Have you ever stopped to contemplate why the Church was ever created? Why didn't **Jesus** pour forth the **Holy Spirit** across the world, with all the knowledge and wisdom necessary so none of us would have to get up early each Sunday. We could sleep in and truly make the **Lord's Day** a day of complete rest. We could all wake up on Sunday, drink coffee, pray a rosary, eat bacon, and lounge around in our pajamas till noon (or longer). The rest of the day could be centered on studying and trying to understand the word **GOD** spoke to us (**Jesus**), discern **HIS Will** for our lives. We would make maybe a dozen or so phone calls to organize our individual service projects, and if you are so inclined, sing some songs of praise and thanksgiving to **GOD**...the creator of all that is seen and unseen. We wouldn't need to receive **GOD's** grace poured out to us in the Eucharist, or deal with the "delicate" issues that surround our reception of **HIS Most Precious Body and Blood**. Delicate issues like the preparation of our hearts and minds. We would just say "thanks", live our lives, and hopefully remember that the "Beatitudes" and "serving others" are central themes of sacred scripture. We could even make the case that being part of the **Church**, the true conversion of our hearts, and all the teaching it has done (and still does) for us makes us "captive" which is totally against **HIS gift of free will**. Right? After-all, how can we ignore the plight of so many in our world that suffer? How can we look past those that lack housing, food, and shelter and focus on our comfort and richly blessed filled lives? Look at the actions of Adam and Eve, study human and political history, and THE answer to these questions will become abundantly clear. **We aren't capable of doing these things on our own**. Some individuals...yes. The rest of us...not so much. We are a people who thrive on drama and a reality that is destroying us. Slowly. To be clear, ALL teaching is a formation of sorts. Some teaching forms our minds, some our hearts, and some our hearts and minds. This is where we receive virtue and character. The latter **should** hold us "captive" to **Grace**.

You most likely know the "scenario" described above is a reality for many today. Not so much the service to others, but the freedom from worship that is practiced in so many families. Being in a business where trying to understand the situation we're in is critical to our mission, I find myself baffled by such a mindset. We still live in a world influenced by **Church** teaching, somewhat regular worship, and organized humanitarian efforts. I've said before that works of charity around the world are at all-time highs, but what happens to our world when the generations responsible fade. Where does awareness and "responsibility" in making the world a better place come from? How can we shift the ever-increasing "self" centered focus in our world back to the ways of **HIS LOVE**...willing the best for others.? How can we supplant "The Truth" for "my truth". One important thing to understand is that for the **Church**, charity work is a reactive effort. We respond to needs as they arise. Our true goal is to eliminate the systems and situations **before** they occur, things such as war, famine, disease, greed. On a certain level it is still easy to motivate people in response to the needs of others when they are revealed. The world is very generous in sending financial, medical, and dietary resources to places under duress. Even for animals. The very essence of Christianity is to restore the Kingdom of Heaven to earth. A Kingdom where all are equal, all are safe, and all are free to live out their humanity. Theologically, this is a completely different effort from charity. It is a belief that the true reality of Creation be re-created back into the hearts and minds of **HIS**

people. Similar to the analogy of staying physically fit or needing to exercise to get back in shape. This view changes the world over-night. This is the **mission** of the **Church**. Works of **mercy** are necessary for a world that persists in "letting itself go". Two questions we should ask are, 1) Why is this so? 2) As the Body of Christ, what is our role for change?

As hard as it is to acknowledge, we must start by recognizing the presence of evil in our world. I remember declaring a personal belief in one of my Formation classes that I felt "evil" was in fact merely the absence of "goodness". In other words, the failure of mankind to do what is good in certain situations, or at inopportune times to prevent bad things from happening. While this may be factually true of all situations, it falls short of explaining the choices and decisions in humanity's hearts that produces harm for others. Everything can be distilled down to certain choices that emanate from some place of character in certain people. Where does character come from? Easily answerable. The emotional, intellectual, and spiritual formation as young people. Lessons that teach us honesty, humility, perseverance, loyalty, etc. These components of our personality "translate" our experiences, filter our perceptions, and process this information for future use. If we lack certain knowledge, attain un-healthy emotional states, or form incomplete spiritual identities, we operate with characters that limp through life instead of "sprinting" with the awareness that we are all uniquely created beings of **LOVE**. The answer to the first question of "Why?". The work of an evil presence in our midst. I don't use the word Satan because it has no meaning for me, but I firmly believe in the influence of an "anti-Christ" that works without rest to distract us away from our **Created** selves. It has no real power over us, except for our unconscious (or conscious) cooperation. All it needs are hearts and minds that lack the armor of **virtue** and **obedience** to **HIS will**. You might be saying, "Sounds like Deacon Mike is teaching a class in Moral Theology", which is true, but it has also awakened the awareness for me that I have become complacent. I have become too comfortable with my identity as a **Disciple** of **Jesus** which closes me to deeper understanding. Statements like this scare a lot of us, and for good reason, as scripture gives us a vivid picture of what being "lukewarm" can produce in our lives (Rev 3:15-17). **Read this passage please.**

The problem with being the "**Body of Christ**" lies in the reality that when one of us "drifts away" we all suffer. It isn't always so evident, and can be subtle, but everything affects us all in some way. This is my greatest argument for the need for **religious education**. First in the home (for our children are merely extensions of their parents), and then for adults and parents, for we cannot give what we do not have. Most of our efforts should be placed here, for "here" is where **HIS will** is the foundation of **HIS Kingdom**. "Here" is our Hearts and Minds. "Here" is where our Souls find rest. **GOD Bless you ALL** as we begin this **Most Holy season of LENT**.

"Creating Holy Moments"

PAX CHRISTI, Deacon Mike

Comments, Questions, Random Thoughts?

deaconmike@gunnisoncatholic.org