

IDENTITY

A little while back I read a homily reflection by Fr. Maurice Zundel, a 20th century theologian, philosopher, and poet from Switzerland. In this piece he was speaking of the necessity for Christian unity in a common pursuit "rooted in the same Presence of life and love". An ideal which I love dearly. But it sparked a different thought for me, related, but maybe more fundamental. I thought, "I wonder how modern believers see themselves? What is their spiritual "self-image"? Is our faith a hobby or vocation? "This may seem trivial, but it lies at the very heart of the faith we profess, and often our behavior and words do not line up with it. As Bishop Robert Barron would say, "we've prepared and rehearsed all the lines for Romeo and Juliet...except we're in Macbeth". The relationship between GOD and HIS people is "THE" story, yet we live as if humanity's story is most important. When did we create "the heavens and the earth...all that is seen and unseen"? Did we introduce LOVE into the hearts of men? Do we know who we are?

I came into the faith in the early 1970's when the "human-ness" of Jesus was heavily emphasized. I still have a hand sketched replica of the "Surfer Jesus" painting that was everywhere you went. I even held a personal resemblance to this image (physically). We embraced the idea of being "brothers and sisters" with our Savior, we picked up the guitar and sang ballads instead of hymns at Mass. Gone was the Latin, communion rails, and elevated Ambos to preach. In college, we attended Mass in the University chapel either reclining or sitting with our legs crossed on the floor. These Sunday liturgies had the feel of attending **Woodstock with Christ**. To a certain degree this image in Christianity persists today, and that's not all bad. It's just not the **whole story**. We've left the Divine Nature of Jesus out of the "credits". We embrace the human nature of Jesus we relate to, and quit trying to understand the mystery of the **Incarnation**. I get it. This study is difficult, especially when we're asked to commit to things we don't understand, and to some degree, can't know. The difficulty of understanding these ideas has, in large part, formed classic contemplative and monastic study for centuries. After decades of teaching, preaching and writing, Saint Thomas Aquinas (the brightest mind of Christendom) came to the conclusion he was unable to truly know GOD and stopped writing completely, leaving his "Summa Theologica" for others to complete. He died months later. Instead, we've adopted the "ignorance is bliss" approach. We seem to seek the path in life that offers the least interference with our secular existence. I get this too, and am guilty as charged. The danger for us, as Christians, is that as the world has become busier and more frenetic, our faith lives have become the default **"scheduling tool"** to manage time. **Translation:** Faith is what we cut out to fit "other things" in. Can you imagine our faith and Church if the apostles or Saints were inclined to squeeze their "Christian response" **in-between** fishing, collecting taxes, farming, and practicing medicine as opposed to it being **FIRST** in their lives. Can we still imagine a world where GOD is first in our lives and what the result would be?

We've lost our identity as disciples. We've confused being good church **goers** with being Jesus' **followers**. Until recently, discipleship involved the effort to conform the "student" to the "Master" ... moving from **"understanding"** Jesus to **imitating HIS** life. Today we're content to be spectators. What gets lost is a sense of the sacred and holy, and along with it the privilege to serve **GOD**. We've forgotten who we belong to and who calls us **EACH** by name. Nothing like a good challenge...

HIS Holy Blessings...

Comments, Questions, Random Thoughts?

deaconmike@gunnisoncatholic.org