

TO BE...OR NOT TO BE

I'll say this, 2020 is very easy to write. I can only pray that this year goes as smoothly. Once again, it's that time of year to evaluate. I'm not sure why that is, but it's been done for millenniums so why question it now? I should just sit down, write my private assessments of what worked, and what didn't, create a list of countermeasures or affirmations, and devise a "procedure" for doing better going forward. Right? Note !! If I was that organized, I wouldn't make half the mistakes I make. I would schedule my prayer life, balance the checking account, and make a list of to-dos daily I could check off. I would list (a long one) the maintenance schedule for my house, friends I need to catch up with, and revise the work-out schedule I have (that obviously does not work). Aside from my prayer life, some of which is a requirement for clergy, everything else is subject to derailment at a moment's notice. Missing from this list so-far are the obvious priorities of time with family, recreation (fishing), and, oh yeah, **WORK**. For the record, my work as a deacon falls under the heading of prayer life because it's part of an on-going dialogue between me and the **BOSS**. Some things are just too specific, and too personal to dissect here (and you all have more interesting things to consider), but I would like to explore **spiritual growth** as an active, organic effort that needs to be nurtured and prioritized, and... evaluated constantly as a synthesis of our past experiences.

For me, little by little, certain themes keep finding ways to get noticed. They begin as small whispers in my life and wind up shouting until I notice them. I absolutely feel that there is no "age" limit on gaining this awareness, either (hypothetically, this process should be on-going right up to the moment we take our last breath). They can be habits I have that I ought to change or character and personality traits I need to improve. They can also be perspectives I need, to deepen the sense of peace and joy in my Faith and life. Sometimes it's an ideal as big as the awareness of virtues that should form the foundation of my life, things like honesty, courage, dependability, etc. In my experience they're often ideas or theological concepts I skimmed over too quickly. I think we all do this when we hear certain teachings. We think we understand it, we reflect on it briefly, then shift our focus to other things that don't challenge us quite as much. Catholicism, I feel, is substantially infused with such ideas. Some examples: The **Eucharist** as the **real presence** of **Jesus**, **Original Sin** as the "origin" of our poor choices, or the **Holy Trinity** as three "persons in one". It could be the two thousand years of study and reflection the Church has produced (certainly not my lack of IQ), but the one that began "whispering" to me, four or five years ago now, is the mystery we know as the **Body of Christ. Corpus Christi**. We have heard this term all our lives as the mystical way in which we all become and participate in the life of **Jesus**. St. Teresa of Avila's beautiful prayer states, "Christ has no body but yours. No feet, no hands on earth, but yours" sums up an essential perspective that is most often only "gently"

considered by our intellects. If your awareness was like mine, it stopped right there, frozen in a mental image of being “parts” of an idea or icon we have of **who Christ is**. Digging further, is it an image of who **HE Was**, or who **HE IS**? Are we part of **HIS** memory or part of **HIS** Mission...ongoing and alive? The significance in this is obvious. Are we **HIS** hands swinging lifeless at **HIS** side, paralyzed by a lack of compassion and awareness, or...are we reaching out, firmly grasping opportunities to **embrace** others? Do our feet drag the ground, slow to aid **those in need**...or do they rush forward, swiftly coming to the aid of those suffering? This was where the “shouting” began for me. I remember reading comments from a non-believer who stated that “**GOD** had never answered his prayers or come to his assistance”. I thought to myself, “With almost two billion Christians in the world, how could this be?” That’s one or two Christians for every three or four people on the planet.

I began to see the teaching of **Corpus Christi** as the identity I lacked my whole life. We are not the “followers” of Christ in the common vernacular, we are the body of **Christ** tasked with **HIS** mission to continuing to bring salvation to the world. **HE** is still the head, and thus the “wisdom and inspiration” of the outfit, but the reality is that real physical activity is required to accomplish this work. The “poor in spirit” need counseling and compassion, the “meek and humble” are to be noticed and included”, etc. No one is called to be an “observer” of Christ. Even atheists and non-believers do plenty of this. We do not spectate the life of **Jesus**, we participate in, and hopefully imitate, the life of the resurrected **Savior** who still has work to do. This awareness changed everything for me. And... it is a universal or Catholic calling for **all who truly believe**. The root Greek and Aramaic words for “believing” referred to being “assured or assumed” into the heart that which is professed. When St. Paul refers to those who profess a devotion to **Jesus Christ** as **HIS Body**, he is speaking of a living, breathing presence in the world continuing the work (multi-plying it) of salvation until the “close of the days”. **Jesus’** Assumption is actually **HIM** being assumed into every heart that **believes**. This “ordination” to ministry is obtained through **Baptism** and the **Sacraments**, and our **Profession of Faith** each week.

I ask you to give this serious reflection...with as much focus and attention you can give it. It is a foundational starting point for the “**Temple of our Lord**” being built within us. It was always there (before I recognized it), but now the “disks” were removed, like Paul, from my eyes and the true **purpose of my existence** was revealed. I learned I was born to serve, and... so will you. We are Disciples of Jesus if we believe. Nothing has ever given me more **Joy** and **I pray for this to be your experience as well**.

PAX CHRISTI, Deacon Mike

Comments, Questions, Random Thoughts?