

Reflections

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Bringing Light Into a World of Darkness

We are the Salt of the Earth

The Eucharist through the eyes of 10 Saints

Baptist Pastor Now a Catholic

Vision of Hell

*****THOUGHT FOR TODAY*****

He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. Peter 2:24



Blessing to All:
By: Richard Pickard

Matthew 5:13-16. "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the **light** of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives **light to all** in the house. Just so, your **light must shine before others**, that they may see your **good deeds** and glorify your heavenly Father."

The key take aways from this reading is simple and straightforward. Jesus is the way to salvation. His Light of salvation is yours. He died for our sins. All of our sins. He wants you to also be the light in the world. **To show others love and forgiveness. That is what His message is. Love and Forgiveness.**

The light he is talking about are your actions as a follower of Christ. Just as Jesus followed his Father's commandments, he also wants you to do the same. By doing so, you show others how to overcome the darkness of sin in their lives. By your prayers and sacrifices, you in fact, "Shine your light" on the goodness you do to others. They see your goodness, your light, and know in the depths of their soul that your actions opposed the darkness of evil that exists in the world. We hear Jesus talk about this darkness in John 3:19 "**This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.**"

You may not realize it, but your daily actions plant seeds of goodness in others that will bear fruit in time. Christ uses your examples to attract souls to Him. Just as a moth is attracted to a flame, so will others be attracted to the reality of Christ our savior through the good deeds you do. His Light overcomes the darkness within the world and as his followers your light in doing what is right and will help others overcome the darkness of their sins.

The darkness in the world is the rejection of God's will for us and the acceptance of evil which is the embracing of Satan's kingdom. Satan hates the Light...He hates goodness...He hates humankind...Be the light for others and do good to others. **Romans 12:21 says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."**

We must produce love for others in our hearts and do good deeds in the front of those living in darkness. These good deeds then become like the salt in Jesus' parable, which enhances the light of grace into the lives of others.



Homeless people need your help. If you have extra money or can offer a job to them, please do so. Let your light shine.

Christ compares himself to the 'Light of the World' and he wants us to be His lights to all those we meet and interact with. Especially those in great need of love, kindness, and the necessities of life. **This is important.**

In your daily life, how you act around your families, friends, business associates, etc., **has a spiritual impact upon them.** Positive or negative? Each day gives us the opportunity to 'shine our lights' upon others so that we can impart in them a spiritual blessing. Like salt enhances the flavor of food, so to do our actions flavor the spiritual blessings that are imparted to those around us each day.

We all can make a difference in the people we meet by showing love, forgiveness and accepting them as children of God. Let not others direct you away from the Light but instead let the Light of Jesus shine through you to others. What you do each day for the good of souls, **no matter how small it may seem, can move a soul living in darkness closer to salvation.**



Mother Teresa had a wonderful saying that seems appropriate to spreading the Light within you to others.

“If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives: Be kind anyway. If you are successful, you will win some false friends and true enemies: Succeed anyway. If you are honest and frank people will try to cheat you: Be honest anyway. What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight: Build anyway. If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous of you: Be happy anyway. The good you do today may be

forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway. Give the world the best you have and it may never be enough. Give your best anyway. **For you see, in the end, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.”**

Seeing the Eucharist through the eyes of 10 Saints



ACI Prensa Staff, Jun 1, 2024

Jesus is present in the Eucharist and the Catholic Church, and many of the Church’s saints have encouraged Catholics to prayerfully participate in the holy sacrifice of the Mass and the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Throughout the centuries, the saints have taught us through their witness and their writings the vital importance of the Eucharist in the Christian life.

Below are 10 saints who offer their wise counsel on loving the Eucharist more.

1. St. Alphonsus Mary Liguori

“Know for certain that the time you spend with devotion before this most divine Sacrament will be the time that will bring you the most good in this life and will console you the most in your death and in eternity. And know that perhaps you will gain more in a quarter of an hour of adoration in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament than in all the other spiritual exercises of the day.”

2. St. Francis de Sales

“When prayer is united to this divine sacrifice [of the Mass], it becomes so unspeakably efficacious as to cause the soul to overflow, as it were, with heavenly consolations. Here she reclines upon her well-beloved.”

3. St. John Mary Vianney, the Curé of Ars

“If we knew the value of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, how much greater effort would we put forth in order to assist at it!”

4. St. Louis Marie Grignion de Monfort

Before Communion, “implore Mary to lend you her heart so that you may receive her Son with her dispositions.”

5. St. Teresa of Jesus (or of Ávila)

“After having received the Lord, since you have the Person himself present, strive to close the eyes of the body and open those of the soul and look into your heart.”

6. St. John Bosco (Don Bosco)

“Dear young people, do we want to be happy and joyful? Let us love Jesus in the Sacrament with all our hearts.”

7. St. Catherine of Siena

“O boundless charity! Just as you gave us yourself, wholly God and wholly man, so you left us all of yourself as food so that while we are pilgrims in this life, we might not collapse in our weariness but be strengthened by you, heavenly food.”

8. St. John Paul II

"Dear brothers and sisters: We must feel challenged by the needs of so many brothers. We cannot close our hearts to their requests for help. And we cannot forget that 'man does not live by bread alone.' We need the 'living bread come down from heaven.' This bread is Jesus. Feeding on it means receiving the very life of God, opening ourselves to the logic of love and sharing."

9. St. Thérèse of Lisieux

"I remembered having heard that one obtains all the favors asked for on one's first Communion day. This thought consoled me immediately, and though I was only 6 years old at the time, I said to myself: 'I will pray for my poor old man [someone she had tried to give alms to] on the day of my first Communion.'"

10. St. Francis of Assisi

"When I cannot attend holy Mass, I adore the body of Christ with the eyes of the spirit in prayer, the same as I adore him when I see him at Mass."



Former Baptist Pastor Explains His Conversion to Catholicism

Is this the same Church that traces its roots back to the Apostles?



John Thompson is a good-humored, energetic Catholic most anxious to share his faith in Christ with others. He speaks with a deep conviction and unwavering certainty as he declares the Catholic Church to be “the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church founded by Christ,” and invites others to examine the Church’s history and teachings.

However, John has not always held this view. In 1990, the then 41-year-old resigned as senior pastor of the First Baptist Church of Orange, California, congregation not far from Holy Family Cathedral, which was previously the cathedral church of the Diocese of Orange.

Born in Long Beach and reared in Fullerton, John has since visited many parishes sharing the story of his conversion. He spoke with this writer to discuss his conversion and shared his perspective on the Church and Protestantism.

What were your early attitudes towards Catholics?

Negative. I was reared with an anti-Catholic bias. I didn't know a thing about Catholics, other than that they were profane, totally secularized idol worshippers, who obviously didn't know God; they didn't talk about God in their own personal lives. I maintained a lot of vague prejudices that Protestants are raised with, that Catholics are somehow less than Protestants, not really Christians and that they really don't live out their faith. There is a lot of fear and mistrust of the Catholic Church based on ignorance.

When did you begin to have doubts about your Baptist faith?

Around 1988. I began studying to find out why different Christian religions use different forms of worship. There are a vast variety of worship forms. I wanted to confirm in my own mind that what I had been raised with was really right.

I went back and looked at worship in the early Church. I expected to find the Baptist Church with preaching and worship that reflected Baptist beliefs. Yet I found that the earliest post-Scriptural documents that we have speak of liturgy from the very beginning. You don't find the free worship of the Baptist or the Evangelical tradition. You find the liturgy, forms of worship and set prayers from very early in the Church.

And, most importantly, you find not just the Liturgy of the Word, the proclaimed or preached Word of God, but you have the Liturgy of the Eucharist. You discover the two-fold action of hearing the Word of God and responding by offering up the Sacrifice through which you receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ in the Eucharist. As I began to see this, I was touched. This is what I was missing in worship, the two-fold action of hearing and receiving.

Sounds like the Thomas Howard [1935-2020] conversation story in Evangelical is Not Enough.

Definitely when I read his book, I realized that this is exactly what I was feeling. Howard explained many of the shortcomings of Evangelical Protestantism. I highly recommend his beautifully written book. It is devastating to Evangelical Protestant belief from the point of view that the Protestant Reformation, as necessary as reform in the Catholic Church may have been at the time of Martin Luther, threw out the very core of the Church.

Martin Luther is perhaps best remembered for his teaching that the individual believer is saved by faith alone.

Yes, but the Bible never says that we are saved by faith *alone*! By faith, yes, but not by faith alone. It is totally Scriptural, however, to say that we are saved by faith *and* works, as the Catholic Church teaches. Scripture says we are saved by faith working in love [Galatians 5:6].

As a Baptist minister, I was troubled when I came across passages such as the one where the Lord Jesus would say he who perseveres to the end shall be saved [Matthew 24:13]. And how many times Paul likened his experience with running a race, and how it says he is not finished yet, he has not yet won the prize for which he is striving [1 Corinthians 9:24-27]. Paul also admonishes us to work out our salvation in fear and trembling [Philippians 2:12].

There were many other Scriptures that I, as an Evangelical Protestant, just kind of zipped over. The whole of John Chapter 6, we just kind of zipped over that. What did Jesus mean by eating his flesh and drinking his blood? Baptists certainly do not subscribe to that.

This topic leads us into the whole question of sola scriptura, the common Protestant belief that the Bible is the only source of God's revelation, and that the individual believer has the ultimate authority to interpret that Scripture.

As I was struggling through my identity as a Baptist, I really came to see how *sola scriptura* opened the door to some real problems in the life of the Church. Each person is free to read the Scripture, pray to the Holy Spirit, and then determine what the Scripture means to him or her. Then the believer is free to choose the Christian denomination that best suits his or her reading of the Bible or start his or her own denomination for that matter!

Yet something's wrong. When the Scriptures were given to us by God, he must have had something in mind. If a certain passage means A, then it can't mean B, even though denomination XYZ says that's what it means.

There was a real tension here for me as a Baptist pastor; how could I know what the Scriptures really mean? Former Evangelical minister Scott Hahn said that if Protestant ministers were really honest about preparing and delivering their sermons, they would say from the pulpit, "This is the Word of God, I think."

That's exactly how I felt. Scripture is not what most Baptists and Evangelicals think it is! The word of God is something more fluid than dried ink on a page. The Scriptures are living documents reflecting God working through people. That's where the Catholic Church teaches us that the word of God comes down to us not on the page, but through the living tradition of the Church. When you discard the teaching authority of the Church as Protestants do, there is no way to authoritatively know what the Word of God is.

This perspective, in turn, divides Christians and leads them into a variety of different directions.

The tremendous divisions within Christianity and the proliferation of thousands of different Christian denominations has bothered me for a long, long time. Christ established his Church, one Church, one in love, one in doctrine, one in effort, one in the Spirit, and yet what happened, primarily triggered by Martin Luther, was a whole process of splintering. And when followers of Martin Luther did not agree with him about his interpretation of Scripture, then they splintered off, and splintered, and splintered, and splintered.

What then arises is not the cooperation, unity and love that Christ intended, but tremendous competition between denominations. That is one of the things that really troubled me the most about Evangelical Protestantism, the sometimes-unspoken competition between and among churches for members.

This must put tremendous pressure on Protestant pastors to perform.

Sure, as it did with me in my small Baptist church. But take the case of a large, growing church like Calvary Church of Santa Ana. What will happen to that church if its pastor retires, moves or dies? Unless they can find someone as dynamic as he is in terms of speaking, personality and charisma, membership in that church is going to spiral downward. So, another drawback to Protestantism is that individual churches rely too much upon the personality and charisma of their pastors for their success.

Why do we see Protestant churches splitting rather than unifying?

For me, I had to go back to something like the Creed. There is the core of the faith that we, as Catholics, profess. An Evangelical would look at the Creed and say: "I agree with that. Although I'm not sure about that line about one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church; I would have to redefine those terms a little bit differently than the Catholic Church would. But yeah, I'd hold to that Creed."

But is the Creed Scripture? No, it's a tradition. It's a tradition of the Catholic Church. Protestants do hold to some traditions, the ones they find useful and convenient to their own interpretation, but then they reject anything that they can't find in the Scripture. They think it's anti-Scriptural. Ye, the amazing thing to me was that the more I studied Catholic beliefs and practices, thinking all along that these things were totally unscriptural, the more I came to realize that they were completely consistent with Scripture. Not all Catholic teachings are found in Scripture word for word, but they're there in spirit.

And I would, in turn, ask my non-Catholic Christian brothers and sisters: how can we give up things like the authority of the Church? How can we give up the ordained leadership of the Church, the bishops, and the priesthood? How can we give up the sacraments? How can we give up the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist? These teachings became real and compelling to me. No longer did the Catholic Church seem like the whore of Babylon which I thought it was. More and more, the Church became the beautiful bride of Christ beckoning me and calling me saying that his is the truth.

Does God call all men and women to be Catholic?

Yes! Yes! I believe that strongly. Not all can hear that message and not all are able to receive that gift of faith, to see the truth in the Catholic Church. But certainly, if the Catholic Church is the Church that Christ founded upon the Rock who is Peter and the Church that he endowed with his Spirit, if this is the same Church that traces its roots back to the Apostles, and yes, this is where all men and women belong.

I have experienced this reality with both my head and my heart, and I give thanks to God for my gift of faith and showing me the path to his Church. It's great to be home.

**“ And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church,* and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.”
John 16:18**

Sister Lucy of Fatima Describes the Vision of Hell

At Fatima, the Blessed Virgin Mary told the three child seers that many souls go to hell because they have no one to pray or make sacrifices for them. In her *Memoirs*, Sister Lucy describes the vision of hell that Our Lady showed the children at Fatima:



“She opened Her hands once more, as She had done the two previous months. The rays [of light] appeared to penetrate the earth, and we saw, as it were, a vast sea of fire. Plunged in this fire, we saw the demons and the souls [of the damned]. The latter were like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, having human forms. They were floating about in that

conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames which issued from within themselves, together with great clouds of smoke. Now they fell back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fright (it must have been this sight which caused me to cry out, as people say they heard me). The demons were distinguished [from the souls of the damned] by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning coals. That vision only lasted for a moment, thanks to our good Heavenly Mother, Who at the first apparition had promised to take us to Heaven. Without that, I think that we would have died of terror and fear.”

**PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NO ONE TO PRAY FOR THEM EACH DAY.
ONE HAIL MARY AND ONE GLORY BE.**

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Our mission statement is to motivate people to pray and to be Christian examples in their work, home and with others, for those needing the Light in a world of Darkness.



The Rosary is the 'weapon' for these times. – St. Padre Pio

St. Paul Ministry

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