



SHIELD OF FAITH

"Take Up the Shield of Faith" - Paul

Tuesday August 6, 2019

What Happens if I Cross the Tiber

Oh well, I might as well be out with it. I'm giving serious consideration to becoming Roman Catholic. I've been pushing off writing about it, and mentioning it, out of fear of rejection from evangelicals. My world used to be large and evangelical. I was professionally associated with Focus on the Family for two decades. I led a century old Protestant statewide ministry in Maine for those same decades.

My parents blessed me with a childhood in the United Methodist Church. I learned the fundamentals of Christianity in Sunday School and church. I deepened my commitment to Jesus Christ personally in a Pentecostal sub-culture. That wore thin as I matured professionally and spiritually. I was drawn by my interest in ideas (I have a B.A. in Philosophy from Roberts Wesleyan College) to politics. I viewed this sphere of social intercourse as the place where real ideas collided.

I was right ... sort of. There *is* a collision of ideas ongoing in politics. How *real* they are is another matter.

Many evangelicals in the West are looking back in order to go forward with their lives. The world is making less and less sense to more and more people. Chaos rules, obviously. It is no surprise that Western people who are looking to the past would be casting a long gaze on the Roman Catholic Church.

If you want to seriously think about religion in the West prior to Luther you have Rome or the Pagans to consider. Christianity makes too much sense to me, based on my personal experience, to seriously consider paganism. That doesn't mean I hate pagans or their ideology. When God puts a pagan in my path I'll enjoy learning from him.

I love Christianity. As I think before Luther that leaves Rome. If you go back another five hundred years you meet the Orthodox of the East. To the Western mind right now that would probably be best represented by developments in the Russian Orthodox Church. There are many Orthodox Christian communities in the world. In America we are slowly awakening to the greatness of the Russian Church due to her having survived the most vicious and bloody attack by atheism in all of human history. Russia has always been a bridge from the West to the East.

There are fifteen centuries of Christian development in the West prior to Martin Luther. He was a Roman Catholic Monk who removed a number of books from the Bible. One of them is the New Testament book of James. The others are what Protestants call the apocrypha. They are Old Testament books.

These are canonical books recognized as scripture for just over one thousand years.

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Roman Catholics still read them, and think of them as part of the canon of scripture. What had Luther found that great intellects like Thomas Aquinas missed?

As it turns out, based on my experience at the top of the evanjellyfish pyramid in America, not very much. It's not so much what he found that concerns me the most today. It's what he decided to — perhaps unwittingly — jettison. I'm coming to fear that the baby that his movement ended up throwing out with the proverbial bath water was the Church itself.

My biggest obstacle to becoming Roman Catholic is the hierarchy of the Church. It isn't the theological quibbles like Mary, the real presence etc. It is the immorality, worldliness and politics of what Catholics call the Religious. That would be all the ordained folk from Priest on up to the Pope.

I get the feeling they don't believe anymore. They've become post modernists. They remind me of Protestants. I long for the mysteries, which is something much talked about in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. I crave the spiritual order that is beyond ... everything. I want to touch and feel Jesus. I am coming to know that I need to consume Him. I need God inside of me (I know He is there evangelical friend. That's not my point).

In this world of profound and deepening chaos I crave Jesus more than ever. I suspect this is the heart of the Eucharist in the ancient Christian traditions.

I wonder if this sensibility is similar to what Romans were feeling as their Republic collapsed into acedia. I love that word — acedia. It is defined as “a state of listlessness or torpor, of not caring or not being concerned with one's position or condition in the world.”

If that doesn't describe America I don't know what does. All we care about is Orangeman. That would be Donald Trump, the reality President. Oh yea ... we care about one other thing. Perverse sex. We're on the verge of weaponizing the most potent military on the planet to stop “hate” crimes the world over. That will probably work out pretty well for everyone, don't you think?

It sure is working in education. I am now certain that the smartest people in our entire K thru PhD “education” system are the kindergarten students. Educated folk think of them as simple because they are still too young to be interested in sex ... or gender. The chaos again, alas.

I'm meeting weekly with the local Priest here in Mt. Airy, North Carolina. He has decided to allow me to forgo classes, and is instructing me in the fundamentals of the Roman Catholic faith himself. I am enjoying this process since it gives me many opportunities to ask questions. He is humble, informed and kind.

I fear crossing the Tiber. I fear losing donations to my ministry. I fear ostracism from new, as well as old, friends who are former Catholics. I am, however, coming to fear not being intellectually honest with myself, and you, more than all these other fears.

There are no Roman Catholics in my immediate family. And I'm the guy among them who has lived his Protestant Evangelical Christianity on the front page of newspapers in Maine most of his adult life.

I see this decision as a call to battle, another opportunity to take up my cross and follow Him. I realize that peace will be progressively found in Him alone.

If you must reject me due to your theological convictions I understand. All I ask is that you not make it personal if at all possible. If you choose to engage me on this subject let's start by choosing to love one another. I love you because you are God's creation. I can live with our theological differences. In fact, I'd enjoy discussing them, as time allows.

But at the end of the day ... and there is always an end to the day (thank God) ... we aren't going to satisfy our minds which are bounded by time. No generation has been as vulnerable as ours to intellectual arrogance. We cannot ever know enough.

And that's why I want (more than life itself) to WORSHIP (consume) Him — the Father, Son and Holy Spirit — EVERY ... DAY.