



SHIELD OF FAITH

"Take Up the Shield of Faith" - Paul

Monday, October 28, 2019

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. — Romans 12:1

Your Reasonable Gospel Service is Self Sacrifice

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As part of my preparation for our ten day mission trip to Antigua, Guatemala that begins this Wednesday I read a bit about the Mendicant orders this weekend. For two hundred years before 1776 the city now called Antigua — known then as Santiago de los Caballeros — was the capitol of the Kingdom of Guatemala. This Kingdom included the most southerly state in Mexico, and all the modern nations of Central America.

According to Wikipedia individuals who belong to Roman Catholic Mendicant orders “adopt a lifestyle of poverty, traveling and living in urban areas for purposes of preaching, evangelization, and ministry, especially to the poor.” There are four such orders surviving today that were recognized by the Second Council of Lyon in 1274. They are the Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians and Carmelites. Additionally there are Mendicant Orders today called the Trinitarians, Mercedarians, Servites, Minims, Hospitallers of St. John of God and the Teutonic Order.

After Cortez and the Spanish Conquistadores put a stop to Aztec and Mayan human sacrifice these orders evangelized and civilized the region. Their headquarters and schools were located in Antigua, recognized today as a World Heritage Site because of the centuries old ruins. The city is in the mountains close to at least two volcanoes. One erupted a couple years ago, killing many.

Earthquakes plagued the old city from its inception up until the seat of government was moved to a region less susceptible to earthquakes. Guatemala City was established in 1776.

Surely the Apostle Paul's example, and writings in the New Testament, inspired the men and women who dedicated themselves to lives of poverty and self sacrifice for Jesus in this part of the world. They presented their bodies a living sacrifice.

Their work left an impressive mark in the jungles of Guatemala. Even in ruins the architecture is inspiring and beautiful. The decorations are ornate. None of the churches from the old city are whole, that I know of. Remains include walls and facades. The earthquakes brought down all the roofs a long time ago. I believe some have been restored. On previous trips to the city we've not had time to focus on the city's history. I'm hoping to do a bit of that this trip, when I'm not nursing Paulie back to health after her surgery.

The greatest gift Christianity gives to the world is a love that empowers self sacrifice and suffering. Love for enemies is essential to Christianity.

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In chapter five of Romans Paul writes, “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” It is amazing to think what Christianity accomplished in Central and South America. While I know it is popular and politically/religiously correct in some post-modern Christian quarters to practice “listening” and “accompaniment” with the straggling remnants of indigenous pagan cults the truth is rather more interesting. In a relatively short period of time stone age pagans lifted themselves to a place of learning and enterprise that enabled the creation of Antigua’s architectural wonders. The Mendicant orders of Christianity played no small part in that miracle.

In our age of instant everything we’ve lost sight of the fact that civilization takes time. It takes generations of focused work to build a culture. And a culture is not diverse. Cultures are unique and distinct. Contrary to popular opinion diversity is not a strength. It is a convenient distraction employed by enemies of a culture to erode and ultimately destroy it.

Christian missionary work is not about Americanizing. It is first about understanding. That’s where all true love begins. It begins with developing a deep understanding of a people and a place. And then the Christian missionary sacrifices everything to bring God’s salvation through Jesus Christ to the people and the culture of the place.

The United States is now in a place where it must be evangelized. While many of our people claim Christ, our culture is against Christ.

The evangelization will be carried out by Christians who offer the reasonable service, by the mercies of God, of presenting their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.

Amen