

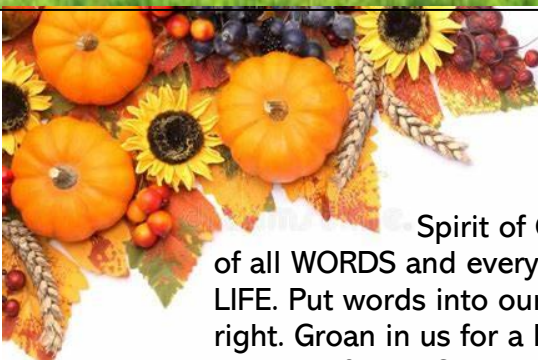
Of Seeds and Flowers

Volume 41 Issue 11 - Founded in 1982

November 2023

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Tis the SEASON TO GO SLOWLY, LISTEN AND PRAY!

Spirit of God, rest like a tongue of FIRE upon each of us. YOU alone are the TRUTH of all WORDS and everyone who LISTENS with an open mind and heart can hear YOU in their own LIFE. Put words into our mouths that comfort and shed LIGHT. Make us be alive to justice and right. Groan in us for a NEW CREATION. Let our thoughts and work be TRULY FRUITFUL. Be the warmth of our LOVE, and the SPARK OF NEW LIFE we share. Be present here among us and give us the BREAD OF PEACE. Hold us in your gentle WISDOM. AMEN.

THREE WAYS TO VIEW THE SAME SUNSET

Three men stood by the ocean, looking at the same sunset. One man saw the immense physical Beauty and enjoy the event in itself. This man was the 'sensitive' type who, like 80% of the world, deals with what he can see, feel, touch, move, and fix. This was enough reality for him, because he had little interest in larger ideas, intuitions, for the grand scheme of things. He saw with his first eye, which was good.



A second man saw the sunset. He enjoyed all the beauty that the first man did. Like all lovers of coherent thought, technology, and science he also enjoyed his power to make sense of the universe and explain what he discovered. He thought about the cyclical rotations of planets and stars. Through imagination, intuition, and reason, he saw with his second eye, which was even BETTER.

The third man saw the sunset, knowing and enjoying all that the first and second man did. But in his ability to progress from seeing to explaining to "tasting", he also remained in awe before an underlying mystery, coherence, and spaciousness that connected him with everything else. He used his third eye, which is the full goal of all seeing and all knowing. This was the BEST!!

James Wilbur, the philosopher/psychologist, says that most of us are willing to call ONLY 5% of our present knowledge and information into question at any one point- and this on a VERY GOOD DAY! Sad. Isn't it? -for religion/Church/Christianity/education/politics/us etc. too!

Lord, we know there is no right way to do the wrong thing. Please give us a better way of seeing.

BETWEEN A ROCK AND HARDPLACE

On the first day of class the professor stood behind a table on which a large open mouth Mason jar was placed. He bent under the table and came up with a bucket of rocks. He filled the Mason jar with the rocks to the top of the jar and then asked the students; "Is the jar full?" The students quickly responded, "Yes".

Then he bent under the table and came up with a box of gravel and poured the gravel into the jar around the rocks until the jar was filled and asked, "Is the jar full?" Again, the students responded, "Yes".

The professor again reached under the table and came up with a box of sand and poured it in and around the rocks and gravel. Again, he asked the students, "Is the jar full?" Now, cautiously, the students replied, "Yes".

The professor went under the table and brought up a jar of water and poured the water into the jar and asked the same question of the students; "Now, is the jar full?" Not to be fooled again, the students said, "Probably not".

Under the table again, the professor brought up a cup of sugar and slowly poured it into the jar. The sugar melted into the water and disappeared. "Is the jar full, the professor asked for the last time?" The students were silent.

The professor then asked, "Why did I go through this whole demonstration?" "What was I trying to prove?"

One student replied, "No matter how busy you are there is always time to fit in one more task'. Another student said, "When you think you have finished an assignment always go over it several times to be sure you have correctly finished your work."

After three or four other suggestions the professor said, "No, none of your answers are correct." The message of this demonstration is simply: **"If you don't put in the big rocks in the jar first you will never get them in at all."**



Lord, please help us to know what rocks to put into our "Church jar", our 'Society Jar', first!

VISION AND REALITY

God's truth - the TRUTH THAT SETS PEOPLE FREE. With an open mind and open heart, we share.

To ALL READERS, FAR AND WIDE, be it known that with wide open arms and hearts we welcome ALL our brothers and sisters, who so choose, to our Christian communities and churches. However, at the present moment, I think we need to pause, take a deep breath, learn from the past. pray and reflect before we make any hasty decisions about the future direction of the church. It is far more important to get things right than to do things fast.



Without using Google or your pastor, can you tell me whether Jesus is fully human and fully divine or just a mere creation of God the Father???

What if I told you that this question came withing an inch of destroying the Church in the 4th century? Most Christians, clerics, and bishops, in the 4th century, supported Arius and the Arian heresy even though he was VERY, VERY THEOLOGICALLY WRONG. Arius taught that Jesus was not equal to the Father and therefore not truly God but a mere creation of the Father.

This crisis, now permanently settled for over 17 centuries, doesn't even enter our minds, but, in the 4th century, the majority of clergy and laypeople supported Arius. *How could so many people be so wrong?* Those who didn't agree with the majority, (the majority were in error) were persecuted, tortured, exiled, and sometimes killed. Hosius, a defender of the faith, who presided over the Council of Nicaea in 325, at age 101 was put in prison for a year and tortured on the rack.

The Arians used sophisticated and tricky language to give a false impression of being orthodox. They put forth a creed that seemed to confer the highest dignity on Jesus- "Son of God, Logos of God, God of God, Light of Light, etc. but denied that Jesus was God. They used correct theological words but change their meaning. Only the wise saw the difference. The Council of Nicaea in 325 condemned Arianism and reaffirmed

the apostolic creed of Jesus being truly God. - and that Mary was truly the Mother of God! However, it took 56 years, and the Council of Constantinople in 381, to finally defeat the heresy of Arianism and for his disciples to be expelled from the Church.

The Arians were LOUD, they were POPULAR, they were in the ascendancy for almost a century and they WERE DEAD WRONG. What should we learn from this nightmare? GO SLOWLY!!!! History teaches that those who are willing to GO SLOWLY, THINK, PRAY AND LISTEN are often right! "Slow is smooth: smooth is fast."

The majority of 4th century Christians were well intentioned in their desire to have UNITY in the community -(which is IMPORTANT to all institutions) - but their desire for agreement came at the cost of destroying an ESSENTIAL truth, namely that the divinity of Jesus was absolutely ESSENTIAL to the Christian faith. IN A NUT SHELL : They put the importance of a unified community above a more critical issue.

The Arianists decided to fill their mason jar with sand leaving no room for the very ROCK that Christ is Divine. How long do you think the Church would have lasted with the core central belief that Jesus was simply a good man? Imagine going to the Eucharist each Sunday and receiving the body and blood of "just a good man"? The damage would have been catastrophic and total.

What is the lesson to be learned from Arianism? Sometimes things may seem important at the present moment, but the proposed solution can damage more essential matters. Now, after the dust has settled, we realize how much damage the Arians could have done by demanding everyone agree with them for the sake of UNITY within the community, while ignoring what was essential – the Divinity of Christ.

The present movement in our society to redefine the very essence of what it means to be a man, a woman or even a person, and the truth about the sacrament of marriage, threatens to realign and destroy our most fundamental institution which is the family. This isn't the Church's FIRST RODEO! -and it certainly won't be the last! We now take the divinity of Christ and Mary as the Mother of GOD for granted.



IN THE 4TH CENTURY ARIAN CRISIS, UNITY WAS STRESSED AS MORE IMPORTANT THAN GOSPEL, BIBLICAL TRUTH. Now, is the church and society at the same place? Are we just "going-along to get along"? The 4th century church fought over what they thought was IMPORTANT as opposed to what was ESSENTIAL. Are we in the 21st century, like the Arians, demanding solutions that could cause more harm than good?

I wish I was 86 when I was 46 or 56 years old. It is amazing how differently, God, family, society, politicians, bishops, look like from the mountain top of 86. How important some things become and very unimportant others. I have stopped doing our Mary's Field podcasts in favor of spending more time praying! - real



If you like this newsletter, perhaps it would be a good dare to dare you to share it with someone, perhaps your pastor, or friend who would like to stop and reflect for a moment on critical present issues.



CUIDADO! BEWARE! DANGER!



FACT: In ANY ORGANIZATION/CHURCH, the institution/Church can acquire a state of UNITY AROUND AN IMPORTANT ISSUE but in the process be avoiding or seriously offending or denying an **ESSENTIAL ISSUE**. And so, the institution/Church celebrates becoming one, totally unified about an important matter but, at the same time gives up, surrenders UNITY ABOUT AN ESSENTIAL MATTER, like God's Word, the divinity of Jesus, Scriptures, or the fact that God created Christian Marriage to be a union between one man and one woman. Are we being nearsighted/ Are we changing truths which are immutable, not to be changed? Are we losing our moorings? Afraid of social excommunication? Are we making up our own Christ? Are we picking and choosing from the Bible what we "agree with" and are continually "evolving" in our understanding so that it becomes easy to justify almost anything in personal and social morality? Are we making it up as we go along?

Will someone, ANYONE, preferably a Scripture scholar/theologian not the local pastor, congregation, principal, superintendent of schools, kindergarten teacher, professor, political party, tell me how to interpret. Leviticus 18; 22. Romans 1: 26-27. Corinthians 6:9-11. and still remain a Christian. As Christians, we MUST DEAL with these scriptures before moving on. REMEMBER: Jesus, Paul, the Apostles WERE NOT POPULAR. Jesus and ALL the Apostles, except John, were killed for their religion and preaching of the Gospel/Scriptures/Truth.

KEEP CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS and Share the Message of Peace, Love, and Hope throughout the Advent Season with your loved ones, family, and friends. - BUT ONLY, TO REMIND OURSELVES AND OUR FELLOW CHRISTIANS, NOT TO CHANGE ANYONE ELSE.

1. Send only religious Christmas cards.
2. Use postage stamps that feature a religious theme.
3. Hang an Advent Calendar and open a window each day.
4. Display your nativity set in a window or on the lawn where others can see it.
5. Place a candle in the window to symbolize the light of Christ.
6. Listen prayerfully to traditional Christmas carols that honor Christ's birth.
7. Read Christmas scripture and stories to children.
8. Purchase a gift, wrap it, and give it to the poor - and encourage a child to do the same.
9. Use decorations and greetings of "Merry Christmas" instead of "Happy Holidays."
10. Have a child place a straw in the creche for each good deed done as a gift to the Baby Jesus during Advent.
11. Pray for the young, so that when they become adults they will not regard Christmas as just another holiday free from work.



WISE MEN STILL SEEK HIM!



Rabbi: "How will you know when the dawn has arrived?"

1st Student: "When you look into the distance and can make out the first cedar of Lebanon."

2nd Student: "When you look out on the horizon and can distinguish between a wolf and a dog."

Rabbi: "You will know that the dawn has arrived when everyone looks into the face of the person next to him and sees his brother or sister."

Breathe on me, Breath (Holy Spirit) of God. Fill me with life anew. That I may love the things you love. And do what YOU (Holy Spirit) would do.

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