

Jan. 7-8, 2011

From the Pastor,

This weekend I started the “Catholicism” series. By the way, everyone is welcome at anytime. It is another reminder of the power of faith. I have had the opportunity to come to know so many different faiths. In each one I have met marvelous people. There was an example on my sabbatical. One of the priests left his wallet at a Roman restaurant. He went back the next morning not really expecting to find it. The owner (struggling with English) understood and returned the wallet with everything intact. The priest was stunned. The owner said: “Please remember that I am a Muslim.”

That was one of thousands of powerful moments that I have experienced with people throughout the world. As soon as we start putting people in categories God shows us a person who breaks the mold. It works both ways. As soon as we start thinking that we (insert the name of any group) are so great, then God shows us an example of someone who destroys the squeaky clean image. The reality is that we are human beings. We have flaws. That means that all our institutions have their flaws. Just before I started to write this, I read about a bishop in L.A. who is resigning because he had recently fathered a child.

That is why we can never judge a religion by its members or judge a person by his religion. While we teach people about the Catholic faith we are also teaching them about ourselves. It is important to distinguish between the two. As messengers we are flawed. There are also flaws in our institutions because of those human failings. Jesus Christ is the only exception. He can pull us up out of our frail and weak human selves and bring us into His perfection.

The purpose of the Catholic Church is to bring people to Christ. The basic teachings of the faith are true. We can trust in them. An example of that is the creed. We say the Nicene Creed at Mass. The particular wording may have changed with the New Roman Missal but the truth of the profession of faith is still there. So that is what we must teach. We must also teach morality. One of the important things about the basic morality that comes from Jesus is that we might not want to follow it, but it is wrong when we don't, because it comes from God. Other institutions can change their standards of morality and ethics. Because ours comes from God, we can't. The rules don't change for the church. In other institutions what the L.A. Bishop did would not be something that anyone could do anything about, even to say it was wrong.

As I go through these classes I think of the line from the Wizard of Oz, “There is no place like home.” The church is my home. I am proud of it. I would love to invite everyone to be a part of this family and feel at home. I know that not everyone is looking to be in this family, but I will keep inviting them. I still know that this is where we best find our eternal home. *By the way, I will be having my picture books of Italy and Israel available on tables during the classes. The rest of the time they will be available in a box in the chapel so anyone can look at them.*

God bless you all.

Fr. Frank