

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

This week I will begin teaching a Church History class on Wednesday to the men who are preparing to become Deacons. Each time I teach this class I remind the students in my introduction about our belief in “the Communion of Saints.” This belief, which is part of the Creed we profess each Sunday, teaches us that all those who are baptized into Christ are forever united to each other through Him. This truth has many ramifications.

For one thing it tells us that those who have gone before us in faith are never “lost” to us. We are bound to them spiritually through Jesus and through Him they hear our prayers and they pray to the Lord for us. I for one take great comfort in knowing that my parents, friends and parishioners, who were such an important part of my life while present here in the flesh, still remain so through Jesus.

Indeed, our belief in the Communion of Saints teaches us that we are forever united in the family of the Lord. That is why Jesus calls His followers to love each other as He loves us. Because we belong to Him we belong to each other through bonds that transcend race, language and age.

As a consequence, when studying Church History we are learning our family history. And like all families, there are some members we are very proud of, and others who cause us great sorrow. There are many Catholics who have made outstanding contributions to the Church and the world in general. There are others who have done terrible things because of their failure to live out our common faith. Still, even those who did evil things remain part of the Lord's family unless they have permanently cut themselves off from Christ by renouncing their faith in Him. This is an important point to bear in mind when we study our past.

Another point I try to impress upon my students is that there are a lot of outright lies put out about the history of our Catholic Church family. For example different groups with various hidden agendas portray the Crusades as an unprovoked Christian attack on the peace-loving Moslems. In fact the Crusades came in response to the pleas of Christians in the Holy Land for help in defending themselves against attacks from Moslems.

Then there is the ongoing campaign to discredit the good name of Pope Pius XII for allegedly not doing enough to stop Hitler from killing Jews. There are so many lies involved in this smear campaign that I can't answer them here. Suffice it to say that the liars behind this propaganda are out to discredit our Church.

We should not be surprised when we must suffer for the sake of our loyalty to Christ. However, I must admit that at times the deliberate distortion of the Church's history bothers me. It bothers me because I don't like people running down my family. More importantly, it bothers me because when the Church's true history is distorted it prevents people from seeing her as she is the Bride of Christ and His abiding presence in this world. There is one other thing I tell my Church History students about our Catholic family. The reason Christ established it was so that we can all become saints. And, in spite of our collective failures, the evil deeds of a few, and persecution from our enemies, the Church is still successful at her mission. We should all be proud to be Catholics, members of the Communion of Saints, while recognizing our need for ongoing conversion and remembering to pray for all the members of our Church family.

With my prayers,

Fr. Conley