

Monastic Scribe III: May 28, 2021

Future of the Church - Part Two

My thanks to the many of you who have taken the time to pen some thoughts in response to my last blog. They were, in general, very thoughtful and well-articulated. I was very impressed with the depth of many of you who show care, love, and concern for the future. There was, surprisingly, little anger nor blame on others but much sadness, discouragement and uncertainty about the future. There were some suggestions for future blogs, e.g. on the Eucharist. I was impressed how many of you recognize the power of our culture to shape how we see the world, the church, and our own lives. Two of thirty-five respondents saw no hope for the future of the church. All the rest see the need for the necessity of much change to give new life to the catholic community. You see the increased place of the laity, especially women.

Here are some of the thoughts expressed.

(Need of) changing Christology, deepening theology, integrating science and a greater realization that there are many seekers who believe in a wider, inclusive church (Gail) In most cases even the clergy and the religious playing by the rules and using the language of the secularized society get bogged down in singular issues (Chris) There is a difference between the Catholic Church in America and the Catholic Church in the rest of the world. We lust after material goods and for the most part have all the material goodies that we want. We have made ourselves into gods (Marion).... Our existence as the only Catholic and historically black college in the nation poses important questions for our society and church. (Reynold) Jesus did not spend time on sexual issues and that seems to be the church's main concern (Teresa).... I am trying to be open to the Holy Spirit. Think back to the time when the community was so afraid; then everything changed with Pentecost. (Dan).... Part of me wants to go back to that time when attending church was meaningful and special. We need to make the church special again, bring back the reverence it used to have. (Barbara).... What does it mean to be a Catholic? To be Catholic we must be universal (John).... If I were to tell members of my family and friends that I love Pentecost, that it brings me both joy and courage, they would likely look at me with bemused puzzlement and a little sympathy for the old man.

Unfortunately, they don't know the scriptures, have little sense of history, and hardly any awareness of the church throughout the world (Ben). ... As the non-believers leave, the church becomes stronger... The delivery of a homily with real substance that will challenge parishioners to spiritual growth should be a very high priority. (Norman)

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There were other good comments as well. I find them all helpful and stimulate deeper thinking. I was able to respond to every written comment sent in. We are church!

In my Pentecost Sunday homily I asked myself the following questions. I share them with you for your consideration.

- What does Catholicism mean today? Can I give some description of the church without centering on Pope, bishops and priests? Is it truly a catholic, universal church?
- What can we white north-eastern Catholics learn from the Latino church? Is it possible we are provincial and elitist?
- What can the black churches, in particular black Catholics, teach us?
- What can the suffering and rejection of gay people in the church tell us about who we are as a people?

What do you think? Drop me a line at joycet@glastonburyabbey.org and let's think and pray together. We need each other. The grace and peace of our God be with you.

Fr. Timothy Joyce, OSB, STL

Please note that I do not speak on behalf of Glastonbury Abbey, the Archdiocese of Boston or the Catholic Church, though I hope my faith is in harmony with all these. Any error in judgment should be credited to me and not anyone else.