

What are we doing this for? August 2020

In the last line of this month's financial report I typed a statement of which I feel strongly. We must remember why we are doing all of this stuff.

We are about to put a lot of financial resources as well as sweat equity into our building. It is a beautiful building, a sacred building... But do you remember when St. Peter wanted to build a dwelling for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah on Mt. Tabor? It was a good idea, but God had a better idea and said, "This is my Son, listen to him." Jesus' teaching was more important than a hut that Peter could build.

Priests often like to build things. Naves, Sanctuaries, Parish Halls. But I want for us to remember why we are doing these things. Our campus is beautiful but all our efforts would be in vain if we didn't first think of the Mission of the Church.

What is the Mission of the Church? It is to reconcile humanity to God through Jesus Christ. Restated: Reconciling humanity is the mandate given by Jesus to make disciples...to make followers. (*Matthew 28.16-20*)

Putting this beautiful House of God back together is a great thing. But to me, it only means something if we understand that we are doing it to glorify our Father in heaven. And we do it with the express purpose of calling others into his Kingdom.

My vision for St. Peter's is to be a place where we are shaped more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ. *That* is being a disciple. How do we do *that*?

Years ago, before seminary, I had a friend and colleague who was a fellow draftsman in our architecture firm in Houston. He was from Indonesia and was a devout Muslim. He and I would frequently speak about religion trying to understand the differences in our basic beliefs and doctrine. At some point we swapped books. I gave him a copy of the Holy Scriptures and he gave me a copy of the Koran. We read the texts at our own leisure.

There are several things that I took note of from his book. Some helpful/some not. (You can call me and ask me about it anytime) One positive thing that is communicated is despite its criticism of Christian and Jewish teachings it refers to the followers of Christ as "the people of the book." Over and over again, the Muslim text identifies Christians as "the people of the book."

The Koran was purportedly compiled in the 7th Century A.D. Consider this! Between 5-600 years *after* the New Testament is written down Christians are identified (sometimes pejoratively) by other religions as the people of "the book." We were seen as people shaped by the Word of God revealed in Holy Scripture.

I know the Bible can be daunting to read at times. But Christians have proclaimed for two millennia that both the antecedent Jewish texts, the Gospels, and the Apostolic Letters articulate the fullness of God's self-revelation. The ancient Church understood that our proximity to Christ and our ability to become more like him is rooted in our familiarity with Holy Writ.

God does not expect you to be a biblical scholar. But in order to be familiar with him, you must be familiar with his self-revelation. To be formed more into the image of Jesus we must know him! As he is revealed in Scripture. I commend to you to commit to reading first the Gospels if you have not already done so.