

Summer 2014

From the Editor: How far we've come from Galilee

Patrick Fitzpatrick

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-tc>

Recommended Citation

Fitzpatrick, P. (2014). From the Editor: How far we've come from Galilee. *Spiritan Magazine*, 38 (3). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-tc/vol38/iss3/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Spiritan Collection at Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spiritan Magazine by an authorized editor of Duquesne Scholarship Collection.

How far we've come from Galilee

Pat Fitzpatrick CSSp

Most Popes are holy men. We call them “Your Holiness”. But, by itself, that quality does not make them good leaders. In addition to his holiness, we are drawn to Pope Francis, the human being. Holy or human — which makes the real difference? Human or holy — which makes for a better Pope? Human and holy — what more could we want?

When we think of a saint do we highlight his/her “other worldliness” or do we emphasize what a real human being he/she was? Has the canonization process over-emphasized the out-of-this-world candidates?

Is religion part and parcel of weekdays as well as Sundays?

Jesus was plagued with “religious” questions: “Why do your disciples do this? Which is the greatest of the commandments? What if ...? How many times?” But he was also asked a core religious question: “What must I do to gain eternal life?”

I picture him pondering his answer. (You may picture him having the answer on the tip of his tongue.) Then it came: “Go, sell what you have and give it to the poor. Then come, follow me.” But that’s a bit too radical for most of us. Too radical for the church also — judging from its history. Too radical for the gospel questioner: “He turned away sad — he had too many possessions.”

Do we turn to religion because it comforts us, gives us security, stabilizes us, gives us something to hang on to?

What messages do we get from various homilies, retreats, prayers, discussions? What devotions and practices appeal to us? What “turns us on” — what turns us right off?

If we see religion only as a Sunday thing — a one-hour-a-week thing — we’ve certainly got a huge amount of time on our hands that has nothing to do with religion. The arena of human life where we laugh and love and live, where we struggle and cry, is as important as the arena of church and prayer — maybe even more important. Could it be that our last judgment will be about our weekdays rather than our Sundays?

Holy Spirit territory

We go to church. Jesus went to synagogue — on the Sabbath and occasionally on weekdays. But most of the time he was ‘out and about’ — where people spent their days and lived

their lives. Out there was Holy Spirit territory: where people lived and worked, met and talked, gathered and dispersed. Jesus had lived it and studied it as he grew up in Nazareth and so was able to talk about it with conviction.

Out there he found his stories, his examples, his ‘for instances’. He encouraged people to ‘look at’, ‘listen to’, ‘take for example’ what they encountered in daily life.

His team of apostles was very ordinary — a motley crew of men and women: no synagogue people, no clerics or priests, no Pharisees or teachers of the law. A group he hand-picked as he walked the roads or stood on the seashore. He invited them to ‘hang around’ with him, to learn from him,

Even with the best of intentions, has our church
‘got in the way’ of Jesus of Nazareth, its founder?

to ‘pick up his moves’. And then he told them to go out two by two and tell others about him and his message.

Not only did he *come* down to earth — he *was* down-to-earth. He had his two feet on the ground. He went where the people were and reached out to them and their daily lives.

We read all this in the gospels and then we think about our church. Even with the best of intentions, has our church ‘got in the way’ of Jesus of Nazareth, its founder? Suppose he were to walk once more among us, suppose he were to come to church with us on Sundays — would he recognize us as his church?

“How far we’ve come from Galilee” — a remark from one member of a group on pilgrimage in the Holy Land. We’ve spread his message far and wide. We’ve built churches and cathedrals to honour him. We’ve a separate city-within-a-city in Rome. We’ve multiplied by the millions. Both street people and the movers and shakers of the world admire Pope Francis. In cities like Toronto our parish churches are more and more international. Our Catholic schools are multi-national, multi-ethnic in origin. We don’t have to go overseas to meet the rest of the world. It has come to us.

What Jesus, what God, what gospel message are we handing on, in our churches and through our schools? ■