

Sunday Homilies by **FR. TONY**

Sunday Homily 07-05-2026

The truth of the matter is that the Awakening which is offered by Catholic Student centers across the south and California, the ACTS, the Cursillo, Christ Renews His Parish, Kolbe Prison retreats, or John XXIII retreat are all the same. They have slight differences but the form is ultimately the same normal everyday people, speak about their experiences of God and a relationship with Christ. They speak about love, and forgiveness, and pain, and healing. They share stories that sound an awful like mine, and then they encourage those attending to trust in the Love of God, the Love of God's Church, and the Love of fellow Christians. And my Awakening retreat was life changing. Two years later I was asked to be one of the leaders and had the privilege of offering the retreats opening address.

The Awakening looks a lot different now and I would assume that different things have different names, but in my day each talk had a specific activity. You made a fruit basket. You took a paper doily and glued pieces of paper fruit on it. Kind of like a paper fruit salad. As I look 20 years in the past I still have some pangs of guilt and shame concerning that talk. I had worked on planning it. I had visited with pastors of different Christian Churches in Canyon. The talk's title is, "What is a C?" It has nothing to do with a minor ocean like the Caribbean or the

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Mediterranean. It really has nothing to do with sight or blindness. It has everything to do with, “What is a Christian?” And in the forever that it seemed to take to speak, I didn’t really know the answer. Or if I did I didn’t have the ability to share it. There was a video tape of that ill-conceived first opportunity of my preaching skills, I would hope that in mercy it has since been erased or tossed into the garbage.

Twenty some years later I am pretty sure I can answer that question. What is a Christian? And the easiest way is to describe to you what a Christian isn’t. I am convinced that these next images are the way that most people in the world today live as though they are Christian. An ice cream sundae, a collection, or a rule book.

Those people who see the Christian life as an ice cream sundae are probably not here today. See a Christian ice cream sundae is all about getting it taken care of. I need a scope of Baptism, and a scoop of First Communion, and a little bit of Confirmation, and maybe sprinkled over the top with some Confession. Those who see the Christian life as an ice cream sundae get their Sacraments. And that is the language they use. “I need to get my kids their Sacraments.” “I need to get my Sacraments.” And get them they do. They will jump through ever hoop placed in

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front of them. They will walk barefoot across fire coals, and sign in after Mass, and attend classes for adult, sponsor, and kid alike and then never enjoy the grace they have collected up. They will place photos in scrap books and holy places in their homes. Candles, and veils, and white ties will become objects of devotion and grace, but they will not grace the doors of the church until it is time to get their next Sacrament.

There are those who see the Christian life as a curator of a great collection. They become great experts in and on specific areas of the Christian life. They know every object, every nook and cranny, they store up bits and pieces and place them in specially curated display boxes and they care for them as a mother cares for her child. They offer guided tours. They write great tomes of knowledge explaining and extolling the wonders of the Christian life. And they make the bits and pieces, the nooks and crannies, the *objet d'art* the matter of great importance.

Then there are those who know Hoyle's forward and backward. They know the rule book and they keep a checklist. Every word, every action, every novena, every act of penance has a place proper and perfect. The Christian life as a rulebook is the easiest to realize isn't it? I have a set of rules. I follow them. I get into heaven.

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If we are going to play Monopoly or Basketball, the rules have to be decided in advance. I can't follow what I don't know or can't understand. The beauty and grandeur of the Faith are worthy sources of awe and wonder. The Sacraments are a reality that we need to dip into regularly. The problem with each of these styles of Christianity is not what is present. They each present a laudable and valued aspect of the life of a Christian, but none of them have life do they?

The Christian life as a rule book is probably the most successful in keeping someone in the Church, but they aren't happy people are they? Each of these styles of Christianity are consumer driven. They are all about what I can get out of it. They can have aspects that are relational but they don't really ever grow into relationships. They don't ever become life giving. Would it surprise you to learn that less than 5% of Catholic Christians have identified their own gifts of Vocation and Charism of being a child of God enlivened and strengthened by the Holy Spirit? After conducting over 140,000 interviews, and visiting 500 parishes in 12 countries, the Catherine of Siena Institute warns that because we are not helping the baptized Christian to live a life of Holiness (the vocation of each of the baptized) to discover their state of life vocation (to Marriage, Religious Life, Ordained Ministry, or single Life) and to discover their own spirit given charism of

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service to the Church and to the world (as teacher, physician, catechist, or more specific a Charism of hospitality, or kindness, or suffering with) that we are not forming disciples of Jesus Christ, and are in fact suppressing vocational life in all people across the board.

So what is a Christian if not serving good and holy things, or a collection of beauty and wonder, or a life that has moral and ethical structures? Just what is a C? A Christian is a disciple. A Christian sits at the feet of Jesus, the Word of God spoken into our human existence, and consumes every sweetness, in word and in sacrament that drips from His lips and continues to return in order to carry that sweetness to the world. A Christian sits at the feet of Jesus, the Firstborn of Creation, in awe and wonder of the beauty that comes from the fingers of those who follow. In art, and music, and architecture, and kindness, and gentleness, and hope, and learning filled to the brim with awe and wonder carrying the message of the source of the inspiration with the entire world. A Christian sits at the feet of the Jesus, the Savior of the World, who offered His life for the rule-less and the lawless and receives a model of ethical and moral behavior for the dignity of the entire human race believer and not.

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“Brothers and sisters, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.” “The Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you.” “You will live.” These lines are edited but the deep soul meaning is here. The Spirit of God dwells in you through Baptism. The same Spirit who raises the dead to life, raises Jesus from the dead. And you will live. If all that happens here, if your life of prayer, if your life of service to the needy, if the use of our God given, Spirit blessed charisms don’t call others to Christ. Then we, you and I, individually are doing it wrong. Not the Church, not this community, not the local pastor, not the teacher at the school, or the catechist at Faith Formation. You and I are not answering the call to discipleship. A Christian is always a disciple, carrying the gospel, the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, joyfully to the entire world, in word, in action, in deed, and in thought. And anything less is unworthy of the name of Jesus.