

Apostolic excitement!

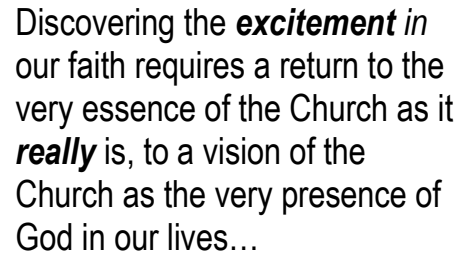
No one could possibly call the experience of Jesus Christ and His followers dull. You don't have to believe in Him to agree that Jesus Christ is one of the most interesting persons who ever lived. There's nothing dull or gray or tepid about Him, whether one finds Him quelling a riot or healing a cripple or raising a corpse or calming a storm or, for that matter, preaching a sermon. They didn't nod off when Jesus of Nazareth preached and taught! The early Church, too, could hardly be described as dull. Read the ***Acts of the Apostles***. Here was a community throbbing with life - thrilling, energetic, dynamic! It was feared, even hated, but ***never*** ignored! The early Christians had their problems, of course, but they were the result of a living, lively, growing community.

What's gone wrong?

The early Church had "favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47). Christians were held in high honor, even by those who dared not join their ranks (Acts 5: 13). The Church's image was that of a revolutionary, dynamic body, led by individuals who were described by their opponents as having "***turned the world upside down***" (Acts 17:6). There aren't many places today where the Church is regarded in this way. The New Testament picture contrasts vividly with the academic, nominal, "respectable" and often quaint, ***old-world*** religion practiced by many.

But when Christians really take God at His word, putting their faith in Christ and understand that the Church has something

exciting to offer as something to *participate in* rather than to associate with; the life of Christian community will begin to emerge as described in the Acts of the Apostles.



Discovering the ***excitement*** in our faith requires a return to the very essence of the Church as it ***really*** is, to a vision of the Church as the very presence of God in our lives...

No, there doesn't *have* to be anything *dull* about the Church. The Holy Spirit is the ***Life-Giver***. Jesus Christ came to give to those who received Him life in all its fullness (John 10:10). The Church, as the "Body of Christ," shares this life and joy through worship, fellowship, discipleship, stewardship, and the loving relationship God shares with us. When God's People take these things seriously and remain open to Christ in the Holy Spirit, the Church's only problems will be enthusiasm, exuberance and excitement.

What's the Answer?

We need to reject mere "*religion*" and accept the Church for what it in fact is, to look beyond the external trappings and go for the heart of the matter. To see our worship and Tradition not as a repository of quaint yet meaningless rituals, but rather as expressions of the loving, joyful relationship between God and his people.

Christ is in our midst!

The Church doesn't have to be dull. The Church isn't, in fact, dull. But discovering the excitement in our faith requires a return to the very essence of the Church as it really is, to a vision of the Church as the very presence of God in our lives.

Dullness comes when the Christian challenge is blunted, when "*maintaining the status quo*" is the main goal, when no one is shocked or upset. But joyfully proclaiming those things that Jesus Christ Himself proclaimed can put an end to a merely formal, external boredom. No doubt this may be extreme, emotional, and profoundly disturbing for some, but it is, after all, Christ's message! And that can never be called dull!

Whether we like to admit it or not, for some the Church can be dull: For those who define the Church as an "*institution*" rather than a ***joyful gathering of God's people*** who share their love for God and one another, the Church is indeed *dull*. Anyone who defines the Liturgy as an endless *ritual performance* by the priest and choir, with little or no participation on the part of the congregation is bound to think the Church is dull. And those who claim the Christianity has no obvious relationship to everyday life in the "real" world will surely find that Church to be a dull hangover of the tarnished golden ages. Yet there is always hope! Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to give life to the church. Read through the book of *Acts of the Apostles* for a first hand glimpse into the life of the early Christian community!

Scriptures on the Church:

Matthew 22:2-14; Luke 14:16-24; Acts 2:44-47; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 4:17, 14:12; Ephesians 4:11-16, 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 1 Peter 2:9,10

What is our mission?

We at the community mission strive to live the life of Christ in our present world following the ancient faith handed down by the apostles and the early church. We see our mission to be active members in living and spreading the love and mercy of God. Jesus taught us that mankind not only receives and experiences the mercy of God, but we are also called 'to practice mercy' towards others; ***"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy"***(Matthew 5:7). Our community sees these words as a call to action, to be merciful in various ways regardless of the person in need. We are called not only to proclaim the Good News, but to **"LIVE"** the Good News of Christ's redeeming love for the world. Our works fall in two areas of service:

Corporal works of mercy which are:

- Give drink to the thirsty
- Feed the hungry
- Clothe the naked
- Shelter the homeless
- Comfort the imprisoned
- Visit the sick
- Bury the dead

Spiritual works of mercy which are:

- Admonish the lost (*Help bring reconciliation and hope for the hopeless*)
- Instruct the uninformed
- Counsel the doubtful
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Be patient and love our enemies

- Forgive offenses
- Pray for the living and the dead

In performing these acts of mercy we fulfill the two commands Christ taught us, to love God with all of our hearts, mind, and soul; and to love our neighbor as ourselves; but it is not just a matter of 'fulfilling the law', it must also become an act of love and revelation. It is a revelation that Jesus' presence is recognized in the poor (*Matthew 25:40*).

In understanding this mystery of love and revelation, we can start to see the full meaning of His words, ***"The poor you will always have with you, but you do not always have me."*** (*John 12:8*) He is challenging us to recognize his suffering in all of humanity, even in the most needy of our world. We welcome all who would like to join us in this mission.

How do I join?

If you are a baptized or dedicated Christian, all you need to do is come to Church and introduce yourself to the priest or deacon, and tell him or her that you wish to join. If you have not been baptized the priest or deacon will start you on instruction and meet with you regularly until your baptism. Adults and children old enough to understand fully what they are doing, will be catechized (taught the faith), Baptized and receive Eucharist and Confirmation as is the practiced in the Orthodox Churches, all in the same ceremony. Infants can also be baptized, confirmed and receive Eucharist if requested by the parents and godparents.

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Church doesn't need to be dull!



"Enter into the joy of your Lord!"



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