

## CHAPLAIN'S BULLETIN JULY 31, 2022



Dear Folks,

What is truly important? Much talk in our society now presumes that what is most important is getting what we desire at the moment, and we decide our own values arbitrarily. Christianity teaches that we need to learn what is valuable and be transformed to grow in appreciation of it. The problem is that in our sinful state, our desires can often lead us astray. What is bad can often look like something really, really good. We can lock ourselves into a lesser form of life than what God has for us, and it can easily betray us. Daniel Mattson was talking to a priests' gathering and spoke of his old life saying, "I was as happy as I knew how to be." And then he traded that for life according to God's plan, and is very, very glad he did. What God has for us is always more than what the world can give us, though it may carry greater challenges. Mattson also told the story of a class that went to a planetarium and the show included pictures of stars on the ceiling rotating. Everyone felt like the room was spinning, but it was really standing still. The instructor said, "Your feelings are important, but they don't always tell you the truth."

The Scriptures talk about the danger of valuing the wrong things and learning what is truly important. "How long, O people will you be hard of heart? Why do you love what is worthless, chase after lies (Psalm 4:3)?" "Who may go up the mountain of the Lord? Who can stand in his holy place? The clean of hand and pure of heart, who has not given his soul to useless things, what is vain (Psalm 24:3-4)." "And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ (Philippians 9-10)."

Many people have a hard time with Catholic teaching because they try to fit pieces of Christian belief and practice into the framework of the world's life vision. It's like trying to put pieces from one puzzle into another puzzle. They don't fit. According to "From Christendom to Apostolic Mission" by University of Mary, "Christians don't see some things differently than others: they see everything differently in the light of the extraordinary drama they have come to understand." Unfortunately, many Catholics have been taught bits of doctrine and practice, but not the larger framework (Jeff Cavins calls this "a heap of Catholicism").

In the Catholic vision, everything is connected to everything else. God created the universe, and made it good, but it is not the greatest good. He made the human race in His image and likeness and made us male and female for a reason. We are made to be a part of something greater than ourselves, to give ourselves in love, to spend ourselves for something greater than ourselves according to the way we were created. We are called to respect the life and dignity of every human being. We are called to family, community, and participation. We are called to meaningful work. We are called to use things that pass away to help us seek things that are eternal. The more we learn about this vision, the more Catholic teaching makes sense, and everything fits together. Then "we may no longer be infants, tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery, from their cunning in the interests of deceitful scheming (see Ephesians 4:14)."

Blessings, Fr. Jim