

RENEWING REVERENCE: PART 3

Over the past few weeks, I have been reflecting on the loss of reverence in society today by suggesting that we can trace the roots of this problem to a loss of respect and a loss of a sense of the sacred. This week, the final entry in the series, I will discuss a possible way of responding to this situation.

A growing number of people today do not reverence, or respect, sacred things because they do not value the sacred, and they do not value the sacred because they have lost their faith in God, in his transcendence, or in his accessibility. The key to renewing reverence for the sacred, then, lies in renewing faith in God, in his transcendence, and in his accessibility - in other words, evangelization.

Evangelization is the first priority of our parish pastoral plan. The term comes from the Greek word for "Gospel," so to evangelize our community means to Gospel-ize it, to transform it with the saving message of the Gospel. Probably the clearest and simplest expression of how to do this comes from the cursillo movement: be a friend, make a friend, lead a friend to Christ. We become a friend to others when we reach out to the other people of our community in loving, self-giving service. We then make them our friends by establishing relationships of trust with them, getting to know them and their families, their needs and hopes, and letting them get to know us. Once we have established friendship with others, then we are ready to lead them to Christ, to show them the difference that Christ makes in our lives and how he can powerfully affect their lives too.

Christ is the key to renewing faith in God, his transcendence, and his accessibility, because in Christ we find all three. We see Christ's divinity in that he is the Son of God, the second person of the holy Trinity, one in being with the Father and the Holy Spirit for all eternity. We see his transcendence in that he exists before creation and he is the Word through whom God creates everything. We see his accessibility in that he took on flesh and became man in the incarnation, like us in all things but sin, and that he gave us the means to continue to know and have friendship with him today in and through his Church.

Christ is the key to renewing faith in God as he truly is and has revealed himself to us. We set things apart exclusively for his service because he is God, and by our reverence for these sacred things we proclaim and confirm our faith that he is at once beyond us and with us, creating us and saving us, blessing us and commissioning us to go out and share our faith, and our reverence for the sacred, with others.