

NOTRE DAME PARISH

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

"At that time there shall arise Michael, the great prince, guardian of your people."



Is the End-Time Coming? The liturgical year of 2021 ends in 14 days. These past weeks have kept our focus on living in the Kingdom of God and living for its completion. Who knows when this world will end. None of us! It will come

when God is ready. We know it ends here for each of us at death. And then perdures forever in the eternal presence of God. Rather than fret about when the end will come, let us behave rightly now.

MASS INTENTIONS

Saturday, November 13 @ 4PM
Tom, Florence, & young Tom Gately

Sunday, November 14 @ 9:30AM
Al Slattery

Monday, November 15 @ 8AM
Joan Langley

Tuesday, November 16 @ 8AM
Deacon Victor Janowski

Wednesday, November 17 @ 8:30AM
Departed Souls in Purgatory

Thursday, November 18 @ 8:30AM
John Benish, Sr.

Friday, November 19 @ 8AM
Amberg/McNierney Families

Saturday, November 20 @ 4PM
George Boeckling
Alan Kalk
Maryann Karls

Let Us Pray

- For parishioner Allison Mack and her grieving family
- For the Bishops of the United States as they gather in Baltimore this week
- For the protection of teenagers and young people from radicalization and violence
- For the reform of the inequities of the U.S. justice system
- For families that cannot provide food or gifts for the approaching holidays
- For migrants trapped at borders, especially between Poland and Belarus
- For international commitment to slowing climate change

How Do You Imagine Christianity?

As Western, Roman Catholic, or Latin Rite Christians, we carry the prejudices of that formation. For a millennium, our view of the world has been primarily Euro-centric. We think of Christianity as a western religion, originally centered in Rome.

In fact, as historian Philip Jensen lays out in his book, *The Lost History of Christianity*, this is not historically true. Europe was one of the last frontiers of paganism and Christian conversion.

Except for the westward preaching of Ss. Peter and Paul, ending in Rome, early Christianity was a Middle Eastern religion, rooted in Judaism, with a decidedly eastern momentum. The first

millennium was a golden age of Christianity, flourishing everywhere in the east. We think today of North Africa, Iran, Iraq, and other eastern nations and regions as Muslim strongholds. Today they primarily are. But in the first millennium, there were hundreds and thousands of Christian bishoprics, monasteries, and communities dotting these regions. Around 800 A.D., patriarch Timothy of Seleucia (part of modern day Turkey) "was arguably the most significant Christian spiritual leader of his day," more influential than the western pope and on a par with the Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople. These Asian churches were intellectually accomplished, drawing from cultures and



traditions more diverse than the Greco-Roman culture of the West.

The advent of Islam in the seventh century did not initially spell conflict. Both traditions include saints, mystics, asceticism, an intellectual tradition, and even overlapping scriptures.

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Covid Protocols Beginning on 1st Sunday of Advent



Beginning on Thanksgiving Weekend, the First Sunday of Advent, the following changes will occur and/or norms reinforced at Notre Dame Church.

- **Masks will continue to be required.**
- **Sanitizing will continue to be required.**
- **The use of Missalettes will be restored.**
- **Singing *with masks* is encouraged.**
- **The communion line or procession will be reinstated.**
- **Pew seating will be open, but social distancing is still encouraged.**
- **The communion cup will not be offered, and communion on tongue is**

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Catholic Church: Growing in Africa; Receding in Europe

YAOUNDE, Cameroon – According to recent statistics, Africa added more than 8 million Catholics in 2019, the largest area of growth in the world.

In comparison, America added 5.3 million, Asia added 1.9 million and Oceania 118,000. Europe, on the other hand, saw a decrease of almost 300,000 Catholics.

Kinga von Poschinger, who works at the pontifical charity “Aid to the Church in Need,” said there are many reasons for the growth of the Church in Africa.

“The fact that this growth in faith in Africa has only increased in recent decades can be explained on the one hand by the fact that the Christian faith is only now arriving in many regions – there are still many areas where traditional African religions are practiced – and on the other hand by the fact that evangelization today is no longer aimed at mass baptisms and thus mass conversions, but at a real and true encounter with God that comes from the

innermost part of the human being. And it is precisely this true encounter with God that makes people shine and be a light for the world,” she told *Crux*. Following are excerpts of her conversation.

***Crux:* What explains the fact that the Church in Africa is seeing such growth?**

Poschinger: In the entire history of mankind, there has not been a single society, not a single culture, that has not striven (and, incidentally, still strives) for the “higher” or for the perfect. At the same time, however, this perfection does not exist in our world: No human being is perfect, no animal, no plant, not even inanimate things are perfect. This striving for perfection, which has existed since the beginning of human history, can therefore only mean that perfection, that the “higher thing” exists (by analogy, for example, it would be completely illogical for people to feel thirst if there were no

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AFRICA**

liquid in the world to quench their thirst).

For most cultures, therefore, it has been perfectly logical that this higher, this “perfection” is God. In our Western world, too, the striving for perfection, for the higher, for the infinite, is still valid. However, in this striving we rely more and more on science and technology: It is science and nanotechnologies that will heal us, that will prevent us from suffering, that will prolong our age.

On the African continent, this high level of technology does not exist. More than technology, people there rely on nature and on people in their daily lives. It is primarily nature, that provides them with food – not the supermarket, and it is the human being who takes care of them when they are old, sick or suffering – not a machine.

Like everywhere else in the world, people in Africa naturally ask for a “sign of God”, in their lives, for answers to their questions – especially in the face of so much hunger and suffering. But at the same time, they are much more open to seeing such signs in their daily lives. In other words, they engage in spiritual experiences, and see in them a proof of God’s existence. The more people have such genuine spiritual experiences, and the more deeply they are convinced of the existence of God, the more their attitude to life changes. This then not only has an influence on their private lives, but also

convinces other people of the existence of God – usually without a lot of words.

The fact that this growth in faith in Africa has only increased in recent decades can be explained on the one hand by the fact that the Christian faith is only now arriving in many regions (there are still many areas where traditional African religions are practiced), and on the other hand by the fact that evangelization today is no longer aimed at mass baptisms and thus mass conversions, but at a real and true encounter with God that comes from the innermost part of the human being. And it is precisely this true encounter with God that makes people shine and be a light for the world.

**Why do you think Europe’s
Catholic population is shrinking?**

In the course of history, the Christian religion (and thus also Catholicism) has become much more materialistic than it was in the beginning. Very often, a good Catholic is judged above all by how many charitable works he has done and what good he has done in his life. But there are thousands of organizations in Europe, through which you can do a lot of very good works, and you don’t have to be a Catholic. That is one reason.

Another reason is that the uniqueness of our faith, namely the awareness that God lives in us (“Abide in me and I abide in you” John 15:4) has been somewhat lost in the teaching of the last decades, perhaps even centuries. The fact that God lives in us is a revolutionary statement. For it ultimately states that every human being has something divine within him or her.

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strongly discouraged.

- **The Parish Bulletin will be distributed once again after Mass.**
- **Altar Servers will return after the new year**
- **All entry and exit doors will be available, with sanitation stations at each.**

Thanks much for the cooperation over the past year and a half. Some, I know, regard mask wearing as a nuisance or unnecessary because of vaccinations. But I must argue again, that we have poor ventilation in our church building. Moreover, some visitors have thanked me for maintaining the mask mandate, having been disappointed that they could not easily find other churches that felt safe.

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Modern scholars place the ending of this friendly coexistence in the 14th century, when Mongol invaders threatened Arab Islam as never before. Some Mongols were Christians, and Mongols sought alliances with Christians, which stirred up animosities between some Muslims and Christians. The Crusades did not encourage good relations, but they were a minor sideshow.

Pope Francis is concerned about the Christian minorities in Iraq, Iran, Palestine, and elsewhere. They comprise the most original and ancient traditions of Christianity from the time of the apostles.

That's why all Christians should seek to respect our respective traditions, continuing to learn from one another, and to mine the riches, old and new, that continue to nourish the faith through the Holy Spirit.

Father Keith & Rocco

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(Which, incidentally, in turn explains why everyone strives for the divine, the absolute, the perfect – and should also strive, as mentioned at the beginning).

The goal of our life is therefore simply to recognize the divine in us, in order to then do His will. Or, to put it in the words of Saint Therese of Lisieux: “The Lord does not require of us great deeds, but only devotion and gratitude. He does not need our works, but only our love.” But this is much more difficult than doing good deeds. Good deeds can be measured, love cannot. Besides, we would have to deal with ourselves very honestly. We would have to look our own weaknesses and faults in the eye and overcome our fears. We would have to let our own “ego” become smaller so that God can grow in us. We would have to hear God’s voice within us, to know which direction to go.

And the third reason I would give is that there are fewer and fewer people in Europe, who can teach us how to walk this path and how to recognize God’s voice in us. So even if someone would want to take the arduous journey to go “through the eye of the needle”, it is not easy to find someone who could teach them. Even within the Church, the teaching of Christ is often presented in a very effeminate way and loses not only its flavor, but above all its attractiveness. It is the truth that convinces people, nothing else.

So the question we should be asking is no longer so much: Do we believe in God; but rather: Do we believe God? If we believe God, the Word of God must become the basis of our lives so that it can be realized in us.

What should this expanding Catholicism in Africa mean for the continent in terms of dealing with its perennial issues of poverty, crime, conflict and disease?

If the faith were to spread in its spiritual depth in Africa, this would have incredible consequences for the continent. A deep commitment to God transforms every human being. He thus discovers his true calling, the truth about himself and his being. The closer a person’s relationship with God is, the greater he also grows in true love. Of course, this also has consequences for his actions. Someone who has grown more and more in love will not do criminal acts. Someone who has an enormous amount of love in him, is ready to give his life for others (Jn 15,13) and thus opens the spiral of violence that has built up in many conflict situations.

At the same time, Christ also gives an answer to the meaning of suffering: In the suffering of the Cross, the fruit of true love is revealed. When illness, poverty or other suffering is sacrificed, an incredible potential of love emerges from it. There are enough examples of this from the lives of the saints, but also very concretely from the lives of people in Africa who live in the midst of terror and violence,

suffering and persecution of Christians, and yet say “yes” to God and to life. These people say that it is not always easy to forgive their enemies. But they try anew every day and are thus a living example of true and genuine love.

Is this growth evidence that Christians are standing up to the threats by those who don’t want Christians to survive on the continent?

It is true, that in those areas where Christians are persecuted for their faith, the faith of the people has reached an incredible depth. We met widows in Maiduguri (the city in Nigeria where Boko Haram was founded) who told us: “The terrorists can take everything from us; they can take our houses, they can take our churches, they can take our husbands and children – yes, they can even take our lives. But they cannot take our faith.”

People who are so deeply rooted in faith, who are so deeply gripped by the love of God, have a strength against which nothing can stand. In this sense, they also attract other people who can then in turn reach this depth of faith.

The above article, by Ngala Killian Chintom, appeared on the website, cruxnow.com.