

Holy, Holy, Holy

It has been said that we live in a world that has shifted dramatically from people learning to respect people in authority, to now putting all people in authority in the position of having to earn respect. One can assert that there have been, are, and will be people in authority, personally, who have lost respect, but the culture seems to assume that there is no such things as the respect of an office or position, simply because of a few offenders. What a sad reality since many have had to learn that one does not show disrespect to an ethnic group, a race, or a socio - economic group because of several bad encounters. And yet, much of what we see today at various gatherings is generalized disrespect.

When I was ordained in 1974 gentlemen tipped their hats (only baseball players wore baseball caps in those days) and stood when a priest entered the room. Of course - they did the same for ladies. This was done whether one knew the priest or lady or not. Children did not eat until everyone was seated and grace was said, and no one left the table until they asked to please be excused, if they could not wait until everyone was done. Many meals in houses today look like feeding frenzies, and the tell-tale signs of the previous night's meal are seen in the forms of fast food wrappers and half empty fast food cups on the floor in front of the family altar (the television set.)

With a general and overall lack of respect and loss of manners, we should not be surprised that this has been transferred to the Church. Not too many years ago no man would ever think of wearing his baseball hat while in the pews. People would never think of talking inside the church (since others were praying), and behind the Altar Rail gentleman put on their cassocks before entering the "Holy of Holies" and ladies donned a mantilla.

At face value one might conclude that these are minor points; after all, the goal is to get people into the church - not create circumstances (as some say "making man made rules.") that might offend worshippers (I think they are called "religious consumers" now. But these church behaviors flow out of the desire to be in the Presence of the Holy. We can be as casual as we wish in the streets, but does God deserve our respect? Must He conform to the ways in which our culture has become less respectful with fewer manners? The way of approaching the Holy - the Presence of God - is well documented in the Bible. Admittedly, most people do not take off their shoes as they enter the Holy areas, but can we participate in helping maintain an environment in church, where we pay all honor and respect to God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and can we learn to show more respect, with manners, to the people for whom He was willing to die? Maybe some people "don't deserve respect," but apparently Jesus overlooked that at Calvary. For a summary of that, simply read 1 John 4:20.

Participating in the Holy has a direct relationship with good manners and showing respect to one another, but if it is not taught....