



JULY 2024

Intro.

July 12, 2024

Good day, people of God! I refer of course to those of you who have made St. Anne's your spiritual home and I trust that you are prospering in the love, grace, peace and mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, despite the best efforts of the world, the flesh and the devil.

I hope every week to address issues pertinent to our context here in America as Christians and to our context here in the Lake Worth area.

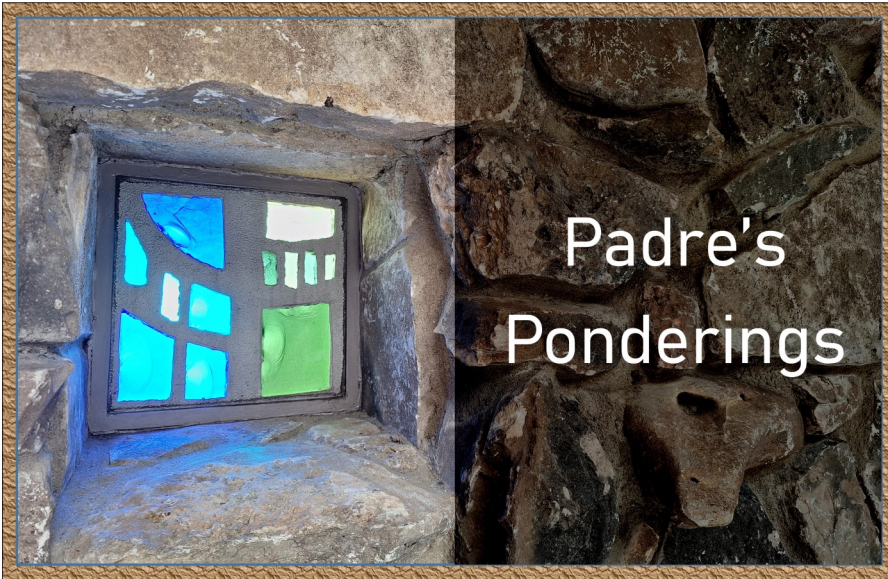
Many times at the intersection of the Christian faith and culture, culture has to yield—yield to the Lordship of Jesus, and yield to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures which are the Word of God. It's a standard that we must hold to out of loyalty to our Lord. We must not curry the favor of the world; we must be faithful to the true and Living God.

Why do this? In order that you be prepared to give a reason for your faithfulness to our Lord Jesus, quite simply.

Remember Peter's words in 1 Peter 3:15-16, "But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame."

Your servant together with you in Christ's service,

Fr. D



JULY 2024

Pondering #1: *Crudeness vs. decency*

July 18, 2024

One of the things I classify as a pet peeve of mine is the coarsening of American culture. In fact, the direction we are going in can be described as anything but “cultured.” Education and elegance are devalued. Etiquette and manners are neglected.

The “F-word” permeates casual conversations. Men glorify violence and fighting. Women are objectified and demeaned in certain musical genres, most notably hip-hop or rap music. And sadly, some women feed that by twerking around with little to cover themselves to the beat of those same rap compositions. Rude, aggressive behavior is lauded. Demeaning others is termed “standing up for yourself.” Keyboard and cell phone warriors take opportunities to criticize and demean. I could go on, but you get my drift.

This descent into vulgarity is something we as God’s people should resist. Consider the following:

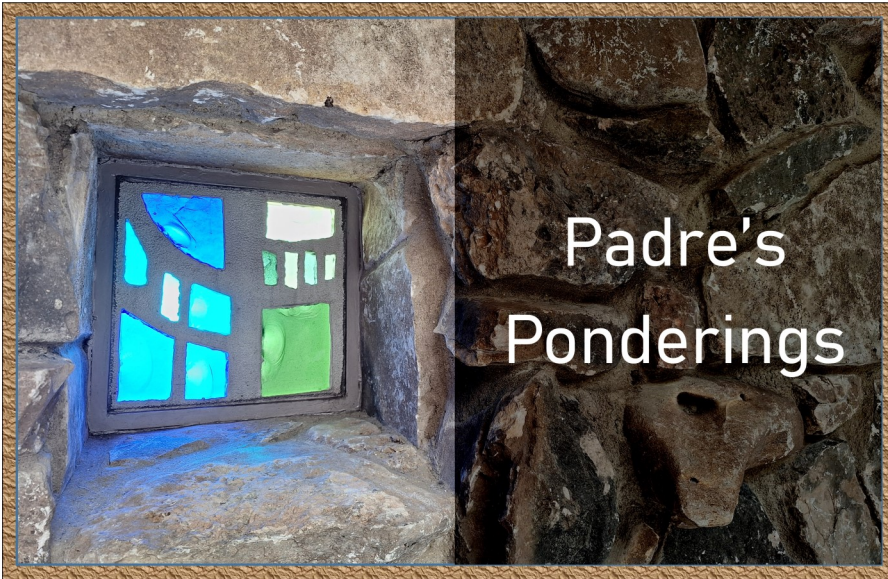
1. “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” (Ephesians 4:29, NIV)
2. “Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place.” (Ephesians 5:4, ESV)
3. “Let your speech always be gracious.” (Colossians 4:6, ESV)
4. “Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.” (1 Timothy 5:1-2, NIV)
5. “Women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control.” (1 Timothy 2:9, ESV)
6. “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Jesus’ teaching in Luke 6:31, NIV)
7. “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3, ESV)
8. “The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.” (Proverbs 22:4, ESV)

To these could be added many, many more.

Let us set our behavioral standards to graciously edify others according to the Word of God, not according to crude, current cultural standards which cut and coarsen.

Your servant together with you in Christ’s service,

Fr. D



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Pondering #2: *Culture vs. Christ*

July 25, 2024

The theme of these ponderings is basically how we as Christians are to think about our culture and how we should interact with it. Which brings up the question, what exactly is "culture"? We talk about it as if everyone knows what it is. Maybe it's one of those things that one can't really define but can describe its features like clothing, food, concepts of time, honor, virtue, and on and on it could go. Since this is my space, I am going to define it as how we as human beings think about and interact with our environment and the people where God has placed us. I think that is broad enough and brief enough that we can move on.

Using this definition, we see that human cultures are our attempts as a fallen race to make sense of and order our lives. Without God, without his Word, without the truth of the Bible informing these attempts, any sense we try to make of life will fall into mythology and falsehood and our lives will become disordered and dysfunctional to greater or lesser degrees depending on how much they conform to biblical norms—whether consciously or unconsciously.

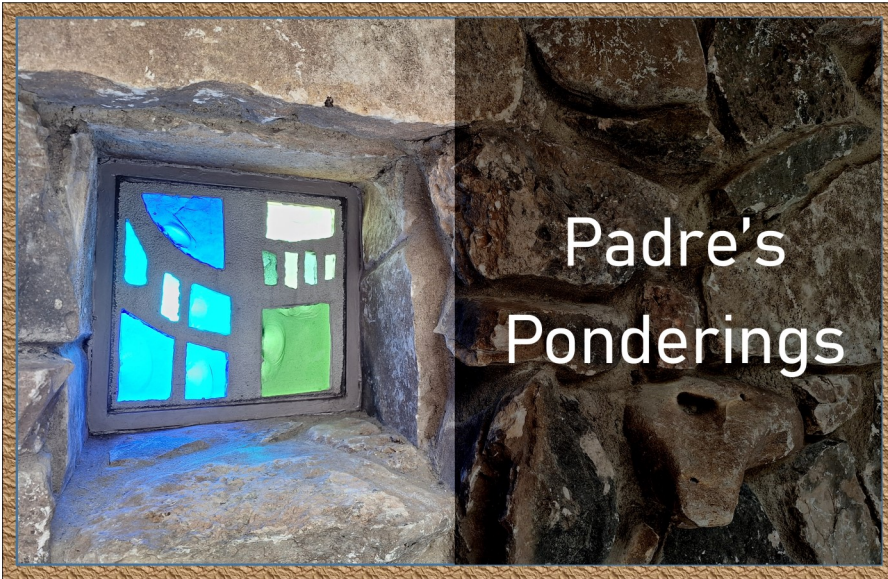
“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.... And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”
(2 Peter 1:16, 19-21)

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” (Jesus, Matthew 7:24-27)

That is why I will endeavor to bring all these topics to the touchstone of Holy Scripture, that in our day we might stand, and not fall.

Jesus Christ is Lord and his Word, God's Word, is true!

Fr. D



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Pondering #3: *Government* July 31, 2024

⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” *Mark 10:42-45 (ESV)*

The founders of this nation had been so abused by the governing authorities that they built bulwarks into the American system whereby national government authority was limited. Structures were put in place so that as long as we harmed no one else, the government would stay out of our business. However, the lure of power is strong, and those bulwarks have been seriously eroded. Now politicians, pressure groups, lobbying groups and voters want to control “the other side,” and want to use the power of the government to force compliance on a number of issues ranging from indifferent to questionable to absolutely contrary to Christ.

That the government should serve the people and not control them is a Christian ideal as seen in the passage above from the Gospel of Mark.

Anytime laws, tax policies and incentives, or subsidies are put in place to manipulate and control, they should be examined to see if service or the desire for power is behind them. We might be in favor of the idea being advanced by such means, but the tool of power is the wrong tool to use to advance it. For if one is in favor of using the power of the government to advance one’s own agenda, then it is hypocritical to criticize it when the opponents of that agenda use that same tool to advance a contrary agenda.

Better to return to the ideals of the founding era, the ideal of Jesus’ teaching, to have the government serve the people and not favor some over others. Most of the time, that is advanced by simply keeping the government out of things altogether.

Fr. D
