

The Catholic Church

By Rev. Joseph Castaldi

With a quick read of the New Testament (the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) two things stand out about Jesus' life:

- 1) He tells us again and again "I have come to teach." That was His mission and that was His special charisma.
- 2) He prayed. He also taught us how to pray (The Our Father) and He personally went off alone to pray. It is interesting to note that each week He went to pray in the local synagogue, sanctifying the "Lord's Day."

These are the two fundamental parts of Jesus' life that demand our attention as we walk toward that eternal home, that awaits each one of us. First, He taught. Yes, He repeated again and again the teachings of the Old Testament. He said that He had not come to abolish the "old law" but rather to fulfill it with His insights. What is the "old law" that He was talking about and is the foundation of our Catholic Faith? The Ten Commandments. They make up the Judeo-Christian message that our beloved country is and will continue to be (we pray) built on. Yes, the "Ten Commandments" and remember seven of them begin with a negative "Thou shalt not". We follow Jesus and His Church if we follow those ten signs that will lead to eternal life.

When we in our personal lives begin to water down or deny those ten commandments we destroy our own personal peace. Jesus said "my peace is my gift to you." Don't you want that peace as part of your life?

Secondly, He himself prayed and told His followers to do the same, "Pray." Who prays anymore? If you measure praying by going to God's house each week then only 20% of Catholics pray. When I came to New London 41 years ago, 75% came to Sunday mass and therefore came to pray. Faith in Jesus and personal prayer go hand-in-hand. If you humble yourself and pray your faith will come back to you (if you have lost it), or, you will notice it increase as part of your life.

We conclude from a page of Saint Padre Pio's life.

God sends holy men and women into the Catholic Church to teach us as role models. Such was St. Padre Pio – the Capuchin monk who died in 1968. He was given four external signs of his holiness that go beyond human understanding.

- 1) Stigmata: 5 wounds on his feet, hands, side.
- 2) Reading of conscience: In confession he would mention your sins if you did not.
- 3) Elevation: After the consecration he would rise in the air about a foot – holy ecstasy.
- 4) Bilocation: For 50 years he never left the monastery where he lived. Yet, on various occasions, well documented, he was seen in other places helping the person get into heaven with the last rites of the Church.

As you can imagine, people would come from all over the world to see him. He at times was stunned by the suffering, the malice of men – and he would tell the person:

“Terrible crosses and unspeakable sufferings have been inflicted upon you. I tell you in His name, that He is with you because you believe in Him. There is only one other thing for you to do now. Go to Church and pray. He will take care of the rest.”