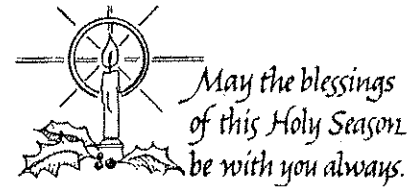


*A Note From Fr. Bill Peckman,
Pastor of SS. Peter & Paul in Boonville and St. Joseph in Fayette*



December 19, 2017

For years I have written my Christmas Letter to my parishioners. This year, I am doing something different. Upon recommendation of a parishioner, I direct this letter to those who have drifted away, walked away, ran away or otherwise left the Catholic Church and to those who have yet to find a spiritual home.

I write to you as one who was in those aforementioned groups. As a young man I drifted away from and eventually rejected not just my Catholic faith, but rejected the idea of a personal God at all. For a few years I was a professed agnostic. I wandered looking for meaning, looking for truth, and looking for something to give me answers. When my search led me back to faith, then Christianity, I was still very apprehensive about Catholicism.

I know many are looking for a place to call their spiritual home. I know some of you left a past spiritual home because it did not feel like home. I know some left because of the actions of a priest, sister, or layperson. I know some left angry and hurt. I know some don't entertain the thought of being Catholic due to how it has been wildly misrepresented in popular culture. I know some have been scandalized by behaviors they have seen especially by clergy of the Church. I know in asking you to consider this, I am asking for trust. I know it is a leap of faith. I have been there.

All I can tell you is this: I know I will leave the light on and the door open. I am willing to work with you to answer questions, bind wounds, and fix problems. I know it can be hard and even intimidating to make that first step. It was for me. Because I will assume you want truth, I will not water down nor change Church teachings. You deserve to have access to the truth.

I will do you the courtesy of being charitable and honest. I will do my best to explain Church teachings and help you understand them. I will offer you the benefit of the honesty and the transparency given to me when I found my way home. I can promise you that I will see you as deserving of a chance; as worthy of redemption. I cannot promise entrance into a sinless parish, for all parishes are field hospitals for those who struggle with their problems, habits, and anxieties. I can tell you that my wanderings in the spiritual-but-not-religious realm led me back into the last place I thought I would go...to the Catholic Church. In thanksgiving to those who helped guide me, I want to extend the same chance to you.

As we celebrate the Christmas Season, the parish and I extend this gift to you. We want you here. Maybe you are a good person, maybe you have made mistakes, or your life may be train wreck. Regardless, the invitation is here. The purpose of a Church is not to be a country club for the right people, an ivory tower for the perfect, a business, a bank, a fraternal order, or social work club. Our mission is to be family, warts and all, all heading to the same goal. We invite you to join us on that journey this coming year.

As a former prodigal son, please be assured of my prayers for you whether or not you respond. May God grant you and yours a blessed and peaceful Christmas and New Year. Please turn over.....

