

Pew-Sitters! Armor Up!

Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil.

For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens. Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground.

So stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all [the] flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6)



The saddest thing about the “Catholic Culture,” (as distinct from the Catholic Faith), is that we have not cultivated a strong “priesthood of the faithful.” This is a biblical principal emphasized in most forms of Protestantism to the exclusion of any “ministerial priesthood.” But, that, itself, is un-biblical, (see 1&2 Timothy, Titus).

Nevertheless, the strength of a well developed “priesthood of the faithful” is a rank and file who are always at-the-ready to promote the faith to others and to defend it from false “gospels.”

But, before I get into how we remediate this problem in our church, I should clarify what the primary focus of “priesthood” is as far as laypeople are concerned. When the bible refers to Israel and

the Church as a “Kingdom of Priests,” the primary reference is to **sacrifice**. By definition, “priests” offer sacrifice to the deity, (Letter to the Hebrews). This designation of God’s people specifically refers to the mode of their worship which is characterized by sacrifices made to God, (Ex. 19, 1Pet 2:9, Rev.5:10)

Over the course of the history between the settlement of the Promised Land all the way to the time of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, the pressing question concerns the “unblemished” or “perfect” sacrifices. . . sacrifices connected to true faith and covenant devotion. Hence, in some places, God expresses disdain for the sacrifices of Israel, (Ps 51:18, Mal.1:7-8). The Old Testament culmination of this question comes in Malachi’s prophecy that “*From the rising of the sun, even to its setting, my name is great among the nations. And everywhere they bring sacrifice to my name and a pure offering,*” (1:11).

The attainment of this “pure offering” is beyond corrupt human beings and, after all, what need has God of slaughtered lambs and bulls, (Hebrews)? The answer is, of course, “**The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.**” Jesus makes the perfect offering to the Father on our behalf through the Cross. More than that, he leaves that saving act to us as a sacrifice to be offered on the Altar. Jesus becomes “*Your sacrifice and mine*” every Sunday!”

It is high time for every pew-sitter to claim this priesthood and to live it and proclaim it. Armor-up by digging into the Bible and the Catechism. Awaken to the wonder of the Eucharist as, precisely, the perfect sacrifice and, therefore, the perfect worship of God. It makes you a member of the ordinary priesthood of the Church.

I place the Eucharist and the Mass at the head of this reflection but, more broadly, knowledge of the faith with a capacity to bring it to bear in conversations with others is what we need to cultivate more than ever. And, this knowledge needs to be bound to real faith and hope so that it is communicated in a genuine manner. Only with an earnest and heart-felt conviction can we cut through the cynicism and soften the hardened hearts in Body of Christ and beyond, into the secular culture.