

Where is Our Zeal for That Which we Hold Sacred?

As Christians who are supposed to be committed and zealous for our Lord Jesus Christ and His Body the Church, let us give credit where credit is due.

Recent headlines have told of the outrage of Muslims at the report that American military personnel desecrated copies of their sacred Koran.

When was the last time, anywhere in the world -- even those parts of the world that do not allow Christians what they demand for themselves -- did we witness outrage over the prohibition, destruction, or desecration of Christianity's sacred text, the Holy Bible?

Yes, let's give credit where credit is due. Even among we "committed" Christians of the Western world, not much attention is given to our sacred texts. Muslims put Christians to shame when it comes to how most who call themselves Christians react to what is or isn't done with the Holy Bible and our Faith.

Let's extend this "credit where credit is due" to the workplace. When was the last time the owner of a Christian store elected to close and lock his doors -- shut down his or her business -- so they could go to Church to pray? Even here in America it is more common to see Muslim store owners close their doors for prayer, than it is to see the same of Christian store owners.

Where, as Christians, is our commitment and zeal for that which we hold sacred?

Where is our putting God ahead of the dollar?

Where is our demand -- as Christians -- for honor and respect toward us and our holy texts in our schools, the workplace, the marketplace, or the media?

What does Christ tell us about zeal for Him? ***"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me . . . he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. He who does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me."*** (St Matthew 10:37, 38).

When a "good" young man approached Jesus regarding eternal life, our Lord discerned that, although an upright and honorable person, the young man was very much attached to his worldly possessions. Jesus told him he must sell his stuff and give it to the poor. That was too much for the young man, just as it is often seemingly too much for us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke to a young woman about that which is ***"the good part,"*** the ***"one thing [that] is needed,"*** which is for us to listen to Christ, to hear His words, and then *do* His words.

Far too many of us, like our Lord's friend Martha, get caught up with the cares and "needs" of *this* temporary world, and become too busy for that which is truly needed, "the good part," all that pertains to God.

We make the present, the “now,” more important than the “tomorrow.” In so doing we lose the ability to set apart, or separate, the things of this world from the things of the *next* world – our life after death, “the [truly] good part.”

Might this be the result of our casting off an awareness of the sacred? For many there is nothing today considered as “holy” or “sacred”; no *beliefs* that are sacred, and thus no *truths* or *principles* to defend. There are no sacred texts or sacred objects to fight for.

As a Priest of the Orthodox Christian Church -- a Church that strives to be the continuation of that which was given us by Christ, His Apostles, and the Early Fathers -- I appreciate our continued awareness of that which is sacred; sacred space, sacred objects, sacred texts, sacred and sacramental worship, and yes, even the sacredness – the sanctity – of life itself.

However, even we Orthodox Christians can begin to take our Icons, our Naves and Sanctuaries and Altars, our Sacraments, our Liturgical Worship, for granted. We can fail to “lay aside all worldly cares” and thereby forget about that which has been set apart by God for us as He seeks always be with us in and through these holy and sacred objects of His creation.

If this is true for those of us who surround ourselves with the Real Presence of the sacred, how much harder is it for those who deny or have lost the sense of the sacred in their lives and in their worship?

So, when those of the Islamic faith demonstrate and riot over the rumor of the defilement of that which they hold sacred, it should give pause to those of us who call ourselves Christians. It should lay before us the question, “Do I hold anything of God, anything of the Church, to be so sacred that I’m ready and willing to march, demonstrate, and maybe even die to defend it?”

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