

Why do we who call ourselves “Christians” continually compromise with the world?

As I consider this question I can’t help but image the proverbial frog sitting in the pan of hot water, the frog that simply sits there and dies oblivious to the change taking place around him. Is that our destiny as Christians in America?

There is a cost to being a Christian, and that “cost” is most often visited upon us by our obediently taking up the cross our Lord Jesus Christ has given us to be changed so that we can change the world. And yet, it is the world that ends up changing us while we simply sit in our comfortable pan of water.

As individuals we prefer to not rock the boat. Soon, even our church communities are going along the path of least resistance, the path of compromise. This is true of all Christian communities, be they Charismatic, Evangelical, or Mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics, or we Christians of the Orthodox Church.

We are all called to deny ourselves and walk the more difficult path, the path less traveled. In the Gospel according to St Luke (14:26-27) our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that if we are to be His disciples, we are to “hate” father, mother, spouse, children, brothers, sisters, bear our cross, and follow Him.

It is important to immediately note that this “hate” for family is not the hate of despising or loathing, but rather putting people and things in second place so that we can put Christ in first place. This sounds good, but none of us really do it. We say it, but we don’t live it. In this, for myself, I must echo the words of St Paul who called himself the “chief of sinners.”

Next to Christ’s Crucifixion and Resurrection whereby He “*trampled down death by death*,” what greater gift has been given us than the Incarnation --- the Second Person of the Holy Trinity taking on of our human nature for our salvation, so that we may be reconciled to God the Father?

For centuries the celebration of Christ’s birth was a major event in the homes, communities, and cultures of the Christian world. For decades here in America, Christ’s birth, His Incarnation, was the proclamation of the churches and a focus of our local communities. But, no more! Now, it is just another holiday, a break from our normal routines.

A publication of Kentucky Baptists noted in one of it’s articles that: “*The penitential dimension of Advent [the period of time leading up to Christmas] has been dropped, although Eastern Orthodox Christians still observe a 40-day period of prayer and fasting before celebrating Jesus’ nativity.*”

Sadly, even most Orthodox Christians slip and slide their way through and around the time of prayer and fasting and, like most “Christians” of American, spend this period of preparation as slaves to the merchants who sell us another Christmas, a secular

Christmas, a Christ-less Christmas. We live in a materialistic society and culture which prefers we love and seek things, rather than seeking and loving people – people for whom God the Son was incarnated.

Rather than preparing for Christ's coming as a newborn, we increase our shopping, deplete our bank accounts, and arrive at Christmas tired, grumpy, broke, and anxious to throw it out as soon as possible along with the wilted, dry, and sick Christmas tree we bought the week after Thanksgiving.

Christians who take the time to look back at the practice of the Church will see that, as noted by Baptists in Kentucky, we who claim to follow Christ once took time out for prayer and fasting so that we could encounter the Christ of Christmas as a true gift – a gift and promise of life redeemed, life saved – and celebrate the Gift.

Homes were not decorated until Christmas Eve or a little earlier, and in the days that followed Christmas, Christians greeted each other with "***Christ is Born!***" Christians celebrated the birth of Christ everyday following Christmas, all the way up to Theophany (Epiphany) – the "twelve days of Christmas."

What would happen if Christians everywhere began living their lives by the cycle established by the Church, rather than one set by those whose interests are only materialistic? Would we be changed? Would we begin to change our societies and our culture? Would society then have to change to serve us rather than being our master? Would our joyous Christian greeting and response of "***Christ is Born!~Glorify Him!***" following Christmas not only bring us joy, but also have a positive and uplifting effect on those around us?

Let' try it and see. Let's hop out of the pan. Let us do the changing.

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