

Reflections

On

A Common Rule for Monastics

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The Body of Christ

(Chapter 8)

“The Church must do what Jesus did: ...”

Paragraph 3, Lines

“This does not require supernatural powers, but it does require commitment.”

Lines 13-15

When I think of a Rule, I think of something put in place to achieve and maintain good order; directives and instructions for the benefit all. That is. a set of edicts to ensure justice, growth and plain old wellbeing.

This particular rule (The Church **must** do ...), if adhered to, would bring comfort and fulfil the law of Christ. Like lines 13 to 15 suggests, this does not require supernatural powers, but to those on the receiving end, the results may seem beyond the natural.

Before going further into what the Church **must** do, I want to reference the New Testament reading from today's (8 July, 2019) morning prayer. It states, in Acts 9:31b, “Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it (the Church) increased in numbers. I feel strongly about this because if the Church realized that it **must** do what Jesus did, and be intentional in doing it, with reverence to God, guided and comforted by His Holy Spirit, this modern Church would also increase in number rather than see the decline that plagues some institutional religion today. While I may not measure success by numbers, numbers do indicate that there is something worth coming to; something with an attractive quality; something (in most cases) being done right.

So what is it that we **must** do? There is no need to reinvent the wheel. Lines 2 to 12 lays it out quite well:

1. Include the excluded. (Just as you did to the least ... Matthew 25:40).
 - **Jesus touched lepers. Jesus entertained prostitutes and despised tax collectors.**
2. Heal the sick. (These twelve Jesus sent out ... to cure the sick ... Matthew 10:5-8)
 - **In Matthew 8, Jesus healed a leper, a Centurion's servant, Peter's mother-in-law and those possessed of demons.**
3. Strengthened the weak. (... that by such work we must support the weak ... more blessed to give. Acts 20:35).
 - **Jesus gave rest to the weary. Matthew 11:28**
4. Love the despised. Any reference on love would do. My favourite is John 15:12 (love one another). When Jesus said love, there were NO conditions attached. The Immigrant, Lord? Yes! The drug abuser? Yes! The homeless? Yes! Not same-gender loving persons, Lord? Yes! **I love them all.** So there was a condition: we must love **"Just as Christ loved us."** John 13:34
 - **Jesus was accused of being friends with tax collectors and sinners. Luke 5:30**
5. Ensure economic equity. Acts Chapter four give us a blueprint for this. All things were held in common and no one had a need. The official name of my country is The **Commonwealth** of The Bahamas. Oh, if that were only true. While we idealize the wealth being common, sadly it is not.
 - **Jesus, in love, told the rich young ruler to give to the poor. Matthew 10:21**
6. Seek restorative Justice. (Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. Isaiah 1:17). We must pay special attention to the word **restorative**. Much has been taken from individuals and groups of people simply because they were different. It is the duty of the Body of Christ to plead on their behalf, so that they receive the quality of life they had prior to the heartless deprivation.
 - **When Jesus saw injustice, he intervened and, in a sense, restored the injured to self-worth. John 8:3-11**
7. Respect/Restore nature. (Come, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that exist, and make use of the creation ... Wisdom 2:6)
 - **When feeding the multitudes, Jesus ensured nothing was wasted. Matthew 14:20**
8. Admonish those in power to do what is right. In Exodus 5:1 Moses petitioned Pharaoh to give the people freedom so that they could do what they couldn't in captivity – worship. The freedom given to the children of Israel was freedom from captivity; freedom from injustice; and freedom from economic inequity. Psalm 137 suggests that while under oppression of any kind it is difficult to worship as you like. "... we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion ... hung up our harps ... how could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" The Church **must** be the cheerleaders for those who have been marginalized and held captive by oppressive systems of injustice. We must be advocates on behalf of a planet that is being raped because of the greed of a few who seek economic dominance, not simply success, but supremacy.
 - **One of the ways Jesus bucked the system was when he threw traders out of the temple. They were doing legitimate business, but they were gouging their clients in the process. Matthew 21:12**
 - **Jesus confronted the Pharisees with, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice", because they placed too much emphasis on the law and rituals, to the neglect of the human condition.**

According to *The Rule*, the Church **must** do the things Jesus did. Some examples of Our Saviour did are listed above in red. Jesus foreshadowed that we would do greater/even more than He did (see John 14:12). This requires our commitment. A commitment in response to God's Grace. A commitment to do His will. A commitment fueled by love.

