

Blast From the Past: Church History & RCIA

Michael Sean Winters | Aug. 23, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

Later this week, I shall be giving a talk to the RCIA group at my parish about Church History. So, I dusted off my notes and thought I would share some of the highlights from the talk I will give.

By way of introduction, I always like to tell those aspiring to be Catholics why it is important to study the history of the Church. Among the observations I make are these:

It is impossible to compact 2,000 years of history into a single lecture. Most importantly, this is not a history class. So, if I am going to have to perform a certain violence to the historical record in order to fit it into our time frame tonight, I thought it best to break down the different periods of the Church's history along lines that show different faces of the Christian life. At different times, based on the culture at the time, different faces of the Church shine forth and I think you will find both in RCIA and once you become a Catholic that your own lives will also have periods where a different face of the Church becomes especially important to you. Sometimes, you will need to withdraw and seek solitude, as the Church did in the early Middle Ages when monastic life was the dominant cultural expression of our faith. Sometimes, you will be concerned with profound doctrinal questions, like the early Church, and you will have to ask yourselves: Who is Jesus Christ? Othertimes, you will need to stand up and defend the faith as the Church did during the persecutions of the French Revolution. You may find yourself called to the spirituality of one of the new ecclesial movements such as Communion & Liberation or Focolare, much as 16th century holy men and women were called to join the Jesuits or the Ursulines or the Capuchins.

Knowing the history of the Church is not an optional aspect of becoming a Catholic. You will often hear people describe themselves as "traditional Catholics." That is redundant. We are all traditional Catholics, part of a communion that stretches not just across continents but across centuries. When we pray, we pray with the whole Church, the Church of the second and eighth and seventeenth centuries. But, if you are going to be a traditional Catholic, you need to know the tradition. Nostalgia for the 1950s is not enough. Our tradition is richer and more complicated than you might come to understand by watching Mother Angelica.

Source URL (retrieved on 07/27/2017 - 08:14): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/distinctly-catholic/blast-past-church-history-rcia>