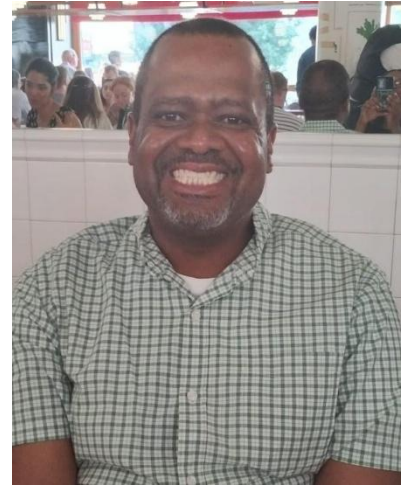


LETTER FROM THE ASSOCIATE PRIEST

Dear Brother and Sisters,

Recently I was at a service where the minister proudly said we don't follow a religion, we follow a man, Jesus. Initially I thought, interesting. The cross above the altar caught my eye. For someone who doesn't follow a religion, he was surrounded by religious symbols.



In certain segments of the Christian church, it has become the vogue to express disdain for religion and theology, the study of the sacred texts which inform us on the nature of God, how we see him and follow Him. I remember in seminary a classmate saying, "I don't need theology; I just need Jesus". If you don't have a need of theology how do you know how to follow Jesus?

The inspiration of the Holy Spirit is a great help but without theology to guide us we can wander unwittingly into error or madness. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit has been used to excuse the excesses of churches or religious groups. Theology, and the order that comes with religion may have been able to curb some of these excesses.

That said, I see the other side of the argument. Religion has excused some of humanities worst acts to include slavery, oppression, wars. We can say that we are more enlightened that we have a better understanding of God, that the Holy Spirit has shown us the error that previous generations have fallen for. When we think like this we risk falling into a trap, thinking that we have it figured out and we can't possibly fall into error. Theology and religion are living breathing things, that grow and change with their practitioners. If we think we have it all figured out, then we have put God into a box. God is too big for that!

Theology and religion are words with a negative connotation, but they shouldn't. They should reflect a joy that comes from seeking to understand and serve God, to grow deeper in our understanding and relationship with Him. We should not be embarrassed to say we are religious because it gives us an opportunity to show that we and our faith has grown beyond associated negative stereotypes. Every one of us is an advert for what God can do in a person's life. We are an advert for our religion and our God. Let us not be ashamed of that.

May God's grace be with you,

Reverend Reg