

Article

Spirituality and Religion Topic of Lecture Series at Transformations

Father James O’Leary, pastor of St. Ambrose Church in Parchment, Michigan, will present four lectures at Transformations Spirituality Center that will explore the idea of spirituality and the idea of Church and how these ideas intertwine. The series will span a period of time from the Age of Constantine through the period of the Second Vatican Council and Pope John XXIII. “Each of these four periods in the history of the Church was a time when the Church was at a major crossroads. They were times when decisions were made—decisions we are still living with today,” says Father O’Leary.

Spirituality and Religion: Can We Have One Without the Other?

A series of four lectures by Father James O’Leary

Transformations Spirituality Center

3427 Gull Road (M-43 east of Kalamazoo)

Four Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.–8:30 p.m.

January 11 – The Age of Constantine (300-350 CE)

January 18 – Pope Innocent III and the 4th Lateran Council (Circa 1215 CE)

January 25 – The Reformation and the Council of Trent (Circa 1550)

February 1 – The Second Vatican Council and Pope John XXIII

Cost \$5.00 per session. Call (269) 381-6290 ext. 310 to register

or visit www.transformationscenter.org

In this review, Father O’Leary cautions that we must see these crucial milestones in Church history within the context of the time in which they occurred. He says, “We need to heed the slogan that ‘hindsight is always 20/20.’ We may see mistakes or even sinfulness in our forbearers, but if we project ourselves into their positions, would we do anything different?” Father O’Leary will put these events into their historical context and follow the thread of spirituality that runs through them so that we can attempt to better understand how the distant past affects us today.

The four periods are:

The Age of Constantine

Constantine was emperor from 306 to 337. He was the first leader of Rome to become a Christian. He ended the persecution of Christians by a decree that granted freedom to all religious beliefs. The Church was unprepared for the cultural adjustments to this edict that required adaptation to the Greek world and thrust it into the power structure of Rome. While the decree was largely ignored, it was a major shift in political thinking that was centuries ahead of its time.

The Time of Pope Innocent III and the Fourth Lateran Council

This early 13th Century period of the High Middle Ages sees Christendom in full swing. Pope Innocent III was a brilliant nobleman, a lawyer and a skilled bureaucrat. His contributions to the Church were enormous and so were his mistakes. Through it all, he was a highly spiritual man.

The Age of the Reformation and the Council of Trent

The Council of Trent met from 1545 to 1564. The Reformation had been underway since 1517. This was a time when medieval society was dissolving and the Church was in crises. Society and the Church were struggling to adapt to the Modern Age that was just beginning.

The Period of the Second Vatican Council and Pope John XXIII

The ensuing period following the Council of Trent saw rapid social and demographic changes and shifting centers of power. By the time of the Second Vatican Council in 1960, the post-Reformation period had ended. The Second Vatican Council is a “current event” for many of us and we are all still living through the Church’s efforts to find the proper stance of Christ’s message and the Church in relationship to the modern secular world.

Since its beginning, the Church has sought to continue Christ’s mission in the face of change, political and social upheaval and challenges from within and without. In the words of Henri Nouwen, the internationally renowned priest and author who wrote over 40 books on the spiritual life:

“The Church is that unlikely body of people through whom God chooses to reveal God’s love for us. Just as it seems unlikely to us that God chose to become human in a young girl living in a small, not very respected town in the Middle East nearly two thousand years ago, it seems unlikely that God chose to continue his work of salvation in a community of people constantly torn apart by arguments, prejudices, authority conflicts, and power games....Still, believing in Jesus and believing in the Church are two sides of one faith. It is unlikely but divine!” — Henri Nouwen

This lecture series will take place at Transformations Spirituality Center, 3427 Gull Road on M-43 just east of Kalamazoo. They will each be held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on four Wednesdays: January 11, January 18, January 25 and February 1. The cost is \$5.00 per session. To register, please call 269.381.6290 ext. 310 or visit www.transformationscenter.org. Please register in advance.

-end-