

WHAT IS YOUR TREASURE?

Real News. Fake News. Good News. Bad News. All kinds of news. Sometimes it is very hard to tell where the truth lies as we seek to sort out all the factoids and information we hear each day. There is always more bad news than good. But every once in a while some good news comes our way. Today I have some of that Good News. In the category of: Did you know?

Today there are approximately 7.6 billion people on this planet right now. There are approximately 2.3 billion Christians (30%) in the world today. Of that number there are 1.2 billion Catholics (16%) in the world today. There are 1.8 billion Muslims (24%) in the world today. One statistical projection you hear from time to time is that by 2050 the number of Muslims in the world will surpass the number of Christians.

One of the reasons for that is the reality that Muslim conversions to Christianity are not allowed in any of the countries governed under Islam. In some countries, to convert warrants a death sentence. That does tend to encourage people. Then we had the wars in the Middle East and the Isis scourge which is winding down and being defeated. Much of Europe has become more secular than Christian and there are large settlements of Muslims in various European countries. The view is one of doom and gloom and defeat.

However, there are some other things going on that do not get the attention. For example, In Germany with 900,000 new refugees from the Middle East mostly Islamic people, there haven a surge in conversion from Islam to Christianity. So many that there have been baptisms taking place in municipal swimming pools because there are so many converts. Who knew? But it is true and happening right now. Even in Austria there were 300 conversions to Christianity from Islam last year. That's just a trickle.

What is accounting for these conversions? One man said: A religion that began by espousing violence cannot lead people to freedom and love. Jesus Christ said: "He who lives by the sword will die by the sword." That is what changed my mind, he said. So, how many converts from Islam in the USA last year? What number would you guess? Would it be 20,000?

Well that's what it was. Twenty thousand.

BUT—while there are many Muslim countries across the northern arc of Africa--Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt—and almost no converts to Christianity there, the area below the Sahara Desert is the most fertile field for converts from Islam to Christianity. Last year alone there were 6,000,000 such converts. Six million! Why? Because they want to. Why? Because they can. Why? Because the Holy Spirit of the Living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ has been poured out all over the world. Why? Because the multitude of killings of so many Christians, the blood of all those martyrs, at the hands of a small group of heretical Muslims, Has captured the attention of many Muslims who are appalled by this evil and hateful carnage. And they see the Christians not responding in kind. And they begin to think. Just like the people did in Rome in the first century when more horrific violence was unleashed on those who followed Christ. The irony was that it had the exact opposite effect—not of ending Christianity but of spreading Christianity. The same reality is already underway today. It's just that very few are reporting on it. The demise of Christianity has, once again, been greatly exaggerated.

It is the Epiphany of Our Lord. Christ is still showing himself two thousand years later. And many are still being drawn to him and to his difficult but truly saving way of life. It is his gift to us. The renewing of the face of the earth—in underway; even if we forget. The new creation is taking hold; even if we fail to notice. The evil and the wicked which screams for attention is always being undermined by Christ and power of grace; even if we get distracted by the bad news. On this Epiphany I exhort and encourage you to do one thing new this year of 2018. Promise to spend some time each week looking for the Good News of Jesus Christ that shows itself everywhere. Go online. Check your Twitter account. Google Catholic News Agency or the Catholic Register or Catholic Thinker or Crux or Patheos Catholic or US Catholic Bishops or Our Sunday Visitor or New Advent or Bishop Robert Barron.

Find access to genuine good news and you will see the truth. You will be enlightened and then you will be able to let that light shine in the world of those around you. And thus you will share your treasure. Much as the Magi did who early on recognized the Good News that was Jesus.