



Boston Catholic Journal

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A Tainted Libation



"I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand.
I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith."

2 Timothy 4:6-7

Have you been poured out as a libation for Christ Jesus?

Probably not.

In fact, the point of our being Christian at all very likely has had little bearing on any significant consequences in our lives.

In other words, if we have not *suffered for the sake of Christ* – shame, humiliation, disdain; if we have not been marginalized as fanatic, a fraud, a “holier than thou” – if we have not been castigated, ridiculed, even threatened, for being *too faithful* to the Pope, the Magisterium, Rome, Jesus Christ, the Gospel – if no epithet has been hurled at us to make us look like fools – then we have not been poured out.

We’ve kept our cup and we have savored it; perhaps we have even been applauded for it.

Why, then, is Saint Paul’s fate so different from our own? Following Christ literally cost him his head in Rome.

The answer is found in the previous verses omitted from today’s readings:

“For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths.” (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

"... *People will not tolerate sound doctrine.*"

Let us put Saint Paul's words in a more contemporary setting:

"Following our own desires and insatiable curiosity, we accumulate teachers (theologians, homilists, CCD teachers, RCIA instructors) who *will* satisfy our desires", in other words, who will teach us *what we want to hear*, not what we *must* hear; who will teach us that sin and corruption, properly understood, are acceptable to God after all, and that this whole "Roman thing" doesn't apply to Catholicism in America, Europe, or, for that matter, to any "enlightened" culture any more. It is hopelessly outdated, unenlightened, "patriarchal", stifling, and ... socially unseemly. Even embarrassing!

This attitude explains why we have kept our own heads (in a manner of speaking), while Saint Paul lost his.

We *have* no libation to pour out – because no one has filled our cups ... or if they have, the substance is profoundly diluted, tainted. Instead of sound doctrine, our cups have, by and large, been filled with *myths* to satisfy *our* desires ... which are not the same as God's. And this really is the root of the problem.

We *still* want God's "stamp of approval", and since Rome will not give it to us, we seek out theologians, clerics, ecclesiastical functionaries more perverse than ourselves who *will* give us both: our own corrupt desires and a counterfeit stamp of God's approval.

This is what the Roman State wanted from Saint Paul.

And it is precisely what Saint Paul would not give them.

I know: you say that this appears terribly harsh. After all, aren't we supposed to be comforted?

No.

We are supposed to be *converted*.

But ... for Heaven's sake ... let us not lose our heads over it.

