

Dear Everyone

Greetings from rainy San Francisco. As is normal in summer here, a few sweaty days were followed by a big electrical storm.

Martin was stuck at the church for a few hours until the roads became passable again. San Francisco floods quickly, especially the town centre, causing the shops to shut and taxis to suspend services, but the water goes down quickly too, so by the evening life was back to normal and the only remaining task was for our local TV to perform its regular service and reunite car owners with the selection of stray number plates which had been found at the bottom of puddles around town.



This month, Martin shares some ongoing thoughts about working with the Gloria de Dios church:

“If it feels good, do it/Let’s agree to disagree/the church is isolated! In my youth, one of the criticisms we used against those who did not see it our way was to say their philosophy was “If it feels good, do it”. It was said harshly of those who did not adhere to our view of morality and we felt that we were obviously right in our condemnation of them. And, if truth be told, it felt good to criticize them and so we did it! Of course we did not see the irony in this. And that is happening here in our church. People are hugging and kissing, albeit whilst wearing masks. They have been hugging and kissing for decades. It feels good so it is done. Somehow, in our church we feel safe. Covid-19 is left at the door! The church is a safe place, it’s outside that is dangerous. And yet we are amongst the most vulnerable being a mainly older group. I keep my mouth shut as, at best, all I would do is annoy people. It seems it is too big an ask to get people to change the habits of a lifetime. I hope and pray for the best and so far, we’ve been pretty clear of the virus.



It also feels good to criticise others who think differently. Recently there was a sermon criticising the Catholics for their graven images amongst other things. Many of the congregation have had a Catholic upbringing and only found church satisfying when they became Pentecostal. So, clearly, the Catholics have got it all wrong haven’t they? There are some mixed marriages in the church and I suspect they agree to disagree so there’s no real conversations taking place. There’s also a tendency here either to say nothing, or to have a no-holds-barred, full-on conflict. Am I the only one who feels uncomfortable about the Catholic bashing? Probably yes! What gets preached rarely gets mentioned again. Often I’ve been thanked for my teaching/ preaching but I am rarely asked any questions and rarely does anyone disagree with me. We can say what we like. No-one is listening outside. No-one is criticising us, at least within our hearing, and no-one is challenging us. We’re alone and isolated. That sounds depressing. And yet, people bear with each other, they love one-another as best they can. Crazy things get said and done, but I don’t doubt that there is real love behind it all.”

Thank you for reading, and for all your ongoing prayers and support. Have a good month!

Hazel X Martin



Joni & Daniel

Latin Link 

