Revitalizing The Catholic Church Essay, Research Paper

One of the three basic pillars of the Roman Catholic Church is Tradition. The Church often uses this pillar of Tradition to validate its actions or to establish its own infallibility. One unspoken foundation that I feel is more essential, however, is that of Love. Love is what is taught in Scripture, another pillar of the Church, and should, therefore be the root of any traditions in the Catholic faith. By judging human actions or the spirit of God by cold laws enforced by the Church, we lose important insight into what our faith and our existence are truly about. Even the Church, in its humanness, sometimes forgets that love of God, others, and ourselves should be the core of every decision we make. The Church that many see as harsh and archaic could easily be refreshed and renewed, not by peppier music or stand-up comic priests, but by emphasis on the spirit of love rather than the letter of the law.

Of course, as a Catholic, I am not opposed to the Church?s traditions, nor do I see them as inadequate. Since the Church is a human institution meant to represent the divine and is not divine itself, however, I feel that there must be room for improvement. For example, I recently became curious as to why women were still not allowed to become priests, so I decided to find out. I questioned two priests, my religion teacher, and numerous other practicing Catholics, and the best answer anyone could give me was, ?That?s just the way we?ve always done it.? While traditions provide stability and unity within a group of people, to be unquestionably planted in tradition can restrict growth. How often do traditions that once held deep meaning fade to become mundane tasks too difficult to let go? Too often, I see the congregation of a church monotonously reciting the Lord?s prayer, a prayer which Catholics believe was spoken directly from the mouth of God, with little regard for its meaning, or singing a joyful song such as the ?Alleluia? with a positively depressing expression. No fault lies within these traditions themselves, but only in the way we view them. The Church must remind its members of the purpose of every prayer, every symbol, and every law so that Catholics do not lose the meaning of their religion. This purpose and the focus should be one of love, and, if it is not, then to be ?just the way we?ve always done it? does not substantiate maintaining the tradition.

One of the reasons I wish to study Theology is so that I may become knowledgeable enough in Catholic teachings to perhaps shift the focus of the Church without jarring its foundation. I also wish to gain an understanding of God beyond my Catholic education by studying the various religions of the world. I hope to discover, if possible, a common thread, a universal truth. Perhaps that connection will be a teaching of love.