

**February 1, 2022**

**THE CHURCH**

I will begin with a historical question (I watch Jeopardy), and anyone who doesn’t immediately know the answer will be cast into outer darkness. Here is the question: What institution entered human awareness 2,000 years ago and from humble beginnings in a remote backwater of the Roman Empire, swept over the entire Mediterranean region, and in a little more than 300 years, had completely routed paganism? The answer is – Christianity, established in the institution we know as the Church.

I might also point out that, after the fall of Rome in the 5th century, this same institution gave form, order, and a sense of otherworldliness to Western society for 1,000 years during the period of time known as the Middle Ages. The Church was the unchallenged, dominant institution in society and it taught values and ethics, preserved learning, and directed the orderly development of what we today know as Western Civilization. This institution the Church has been described as being like a mountain range down the spine of the Western world, meaning that it cannot be ignored.

We are all in awe of the accomplishments of Christianity! But the next question is more important to ask: Just how was it able – from its simple, humble beginnings – to grow and accomplish all that it did? The simple answer is – the attraction of the person of Jesus who by word and example revealed the intent of God for people in such a powerful, compassionate way that he stirred the imagination of all those who heard him. The Church must continually be prodded to remember that it is this same Jesus whom we preach today. The phrase out of the mouth of those two Greeks who approached Phillip continue to haunt us: “Sir, we would see Jesus.” (John 12:21)

Richard B. Tudor