

Religion Column for The Morning Sun (April 6 deadline)

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As a child, I often wondered how we got from Christmas to Easter in three or four months. To a child, it seemed like an old science fiction movie where aging is accelerated by some mysterious process. Of course, as an adult, I realize that thirty-three years transpired between the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and his Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

In our own day-to-day events, we miss out on large portions of life with distant friends and relatives. When we don't see people for months or years, we always seemed surprised that infant children become toddlers, toddlers eventually go to school, children become young adults, get driver's licenses, and are soon off to college. School or family reunions give us opportunities to 'catch up' and realize how much others have changed.

Reflection will also show us how much we have changed.

Somehow when we step away from people or places, they become frozen in time. We watch as our familiar surroundings shift and change; yet by being detached from more distant places and individuals - we lose track of what should be obvious changes.

The same holds true with our relationship with God.

When we step away from a church community, we lose track of who we are in relationship to God. Certainly we can maintain a prayer life; but detached from a community of believers, we will often become frozen in time.

On returning after a time to the church of prior years, we seem surprised that the senior members are now experiencing limited mobility or are perhaps deceased. That young lady with a beautiful singing voice is the toddler who sat near the back. The new pastor has been in place for a dozen years, and is considering retirement.

God relates to us as individuals, but more importantly - God calls us to live within communities. St. Paul speaks of the Christian community as 'the body of Christ.' The members of a body are meant to work in a connected way to sustain the life of the body. If one part breaks off, or goes away - the body continues. I've never known anyone to stare longingly out the front window anxiously expecting the imminent return of their long-lost appendix or gall bladder. Yet the 'removal' is often a tense and dramatic hospital visit.

If you are part of a church community, ask yourself what your role is in 'the body of Christ,' and pray about how you may need to intensify that role to better serve your community. If you are detached from a church community, think about going back.

People change; situations change; we change. Our relationship to God and others needs a community; and it needs every person to step into and grow in their roles within the community. Consider a reunion with God, with Jesus Christ, and with the church.