

08031 The Challenge

If you build it, they will come. If you feed them, they will follow.

Did you ever watch the children at our pre-Covid 9 O'clock Masses? As soon as they could escape from their parents, they would line up to help the Knights set up the donut tables. Are the donuts just bribes to get them to sit through a Mass? Or better yet, could they be a way to teach them to look forward to attending Mass on Sunday? Does really it matter how they learn? ... Or even what we must do to get to Mass ourselves?

For a few weeks during this time of each liturgical year, we read Chapter 6 of John's Gospel. In the first part Jesus feeds the 5,000. In the beginning of the third part, aka The Bread of Life discourse, he points out to the crowd that they were looking for him not because of the signs he gave but because they ate the bread. He goes on to point out that he is the Bread of Life. And, like the woman at the well who did not understand his reference to Living Water, everyone misses his point because they are thinking of themselves and their needs. The good news is that Jesus understood their ignorance and hesitations, and took the time to explain the symbols in his parables or to rephrase his similes.

Except, that is, in v. 53 when he doubles down, and states: "...unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you." And in v. 54, he restates this 'Unless' phrase in the affirmative: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life." There is no symbolism or doubt in his intention here. He means it literally.

Not much has changed since many of his followers cried out: “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” In fact, 69% of Catholics do not believe in Transubstantiation, the True Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Furthermore, less than 40% of Catholics attend Mass on a weekly basis. The even worse news is that Pew research polls have reported similar numbers for many years.

And this, my Brother Knights, is where our mission begins. In his Bread of Life discourse, Jesus speaks of doing the will of his father. And that will is that he loses none of those given him by the Father. And like the Apostles, we are left to gather the scattered so that none may be lost. We may not be multiplying loaves and fish, or drawing water from the well, but our donuts and coffee offer the opportunity for us to reach out to our brothers and sisters.

Now that we are opening up our Church and reinstating our programs, it is time to go out and bring our parishioners back one person at a time. We can rebuild our community by feeding them. I challenge you to talk to the 6 or 7 people sitting around you in your section of the Church. Invite them to our coffee stand. I challenge you to not talk with each other, but to talk with someone you do not know. I challenge you to invite one person, couple, or family to join you at Sunday Mass. I challenge you to do at least one of these things before Labor Day.

If you accept this challenge, then you will be ready for the next step in our program of outreach – our first Community Breakfast.

Can I get an Amen?