

O' BROTHER (AND SISTER), WHERE ART THOU?

This is the title of one of my favorite movies. I would watch it as often as I do "Forrest Gump", but the language in it is a problem for me. Especially in a movie like this, it is very un-necessary, but aside from this it is a very fun movie to watch. The acting, the setting (1930's), the storyline, and the music are incredible. It's a somewhat wacky tale of a couple in the deep south and the antics of the husband's two oddball friends seeking a treasure. It is a story of redemption. It's also a question that's come up, lately, way too often.

We should be transparent at all times, and in all things. The Church, that is. It's important to recognize that our Church, a Family, has suffered, and is suffering, a severe blow from an enemy that exists both externally and ...sadly, internally. They are wounds that bleed from the surgical excise of misinformation, and human apathy...all roaming freely in our world. When the pandemic hit us, the fear was that those who normally attend Mass would experience some level of anxiety over the risk that worshipping together would potentially expose us to the highly contagious, and sometimes deadly virus. Nobody wanted that and certainly every precaution was taken to prevent this from happening. For almost three months the doors of all churches were closed to sanitize, organize, and strategize a new 'look' to the experience of giving thanks that we're all used to. Despite these measures, and continued efforts to protect each other, there remains a 'barrier of reluctance' to return. Naming this obstacle is the first step to addressing the fears or reticence that exists among those choosing to remain home. Speaking for myself, I would cherish the opportunity to hear these concerns, even if a resolution is not possible right now. Safety is a fundamental (spiritual) expectation for attending Mass, so being able to express these concerns are important for our mental and spiritual health.

I think, though, something else is in play. Something much more difficult to address. I say this because over the past few years, attendance has dwindled and involvement in Church functions, and the desire to be part of parish life, has grown thin. Like every church community, a core group of people invest themselves in the activities that promote Christian values, provide church programs, and

maintain the parish organization. We encounter a great volume of mystery in our Faith, the greatest of which is that our GOD would love us enough to redeem us, to save us with eternal life. But what should not be a mystery is that our Church is tasked with assisting each of us to participate in this work of salvation. Its an effort of service to each other in charity, spiritual growth, and worship.

These are challenging times, no question, but its also an opportunity to “re-boot” our faith, to reimagine parish life, and re-commit ourselves to the purpose and meaning in our lives that are Divinely given. If our faith is not “feeding us” then we should lean in a bit more, listen to GOD’s voice with profound intention, and work harder to surrender more of ourselves to HIS guidance. i.e. make more of an effort. This is a genuine moment in history to seek and implement real change. I know it has challenged me in new ways I did not expect. In quarantine I realized my prayer life (especially the Rosary) had become shallow and formulaic. The diocesan program of “Sycamore” we have begun is a powerful tool to re-examine our beliefs, and understand more deeply our relationship with GOD . It’s a vehicle to discover a stronger presence in respecting life, feeling the desire to study the faith, or becoming an advocate for the causes that speak the loudest in our lives. Our Church, our parish, needs us and...we need our parish. If the pandemic is challenging us at all, it is in exposing feelings that already existed before its arrival. The Bishop’s dispensation to miss **Holy Mass** seems to be the “pass” some have been wanting for a while. Actual concerns over health exist and are valid, but four months of Mass attendance without infection should help to ease these fears. Your voice is what we need and your prayers (and requests) are the lifeblood of Christ’s work in our world. The dual parts of the Mass (**Word** and **Eucharist**) are called a **liturgy** because the word means the “work of the people” in Greek.

We gather, primarily, for two purposes:

- 1) To make our world a **better place** (it needs it more than ever),
- 2) To lead each other to eternal life.

Our greatest joy can be walking this path together.

PLEASE remember to vote YES!!!! On Proposition 115

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