

We walk by Faith and not by Sight in the Mass!

This past week I had the privilege to accompany Bishop Baker in attending the mid-year meeting of Bishops in St. Louis, Missouri. There are 270 active Bishops and 200 Retired Bishops in America and they gather together in the Summer and the Fall to be united in the ways they guide and guard all of you, the faithful.

Please pick up a **Bulletin** at the end of Mass and read **my Pastor's Desk** where I point out these gatherings of Bishops are an objective sign of how the **Holy Spirit** is preserving **the Catholic Church** to be one ... in spirit and in truth.

On **my flight home Friday**, I sat next to a man who in introducing himself said:
"I used to be Catholic, but ..."

I hear that a lot these days! Well, he went on to describe that he grew up Catholic in Pennsylvania ... but then got a scholarship to play Baseball at Birmingham Southern ... and there met his wife who was Baptist.

Well she didn't want to be Catholic ... and he didn't want to be Baptist ... so they found a little Methodist Church and have been going there for their 25 years!

He's not really happy with the preaching and seeing the attendance go down to 40 people on Sunday and falling ... but that's all he's known now for 25 years.

I reminded him of the True Presence of Jesus in the Catholic Mass and invited him to come with his wife to Sunday Mass sometime to participate in the worship of God the way God designed it ... through His Son Jesus ... truly present on our Altar.

I also left him with an RCIA invitation card and I got his business card so that I can send him a copy of Allen Hunt's book, "Confessions of a Mega-Church Pastor". It's Allen's account of how he pastored the largest Methodist Church in Georgia until he discovered that the only Church Jesus founded was the Catholic Church. And Allen ends each chapter saying, "Everything you need is in this house."

This is what I mean when I speak of "re-evangelization" ... it's calling those already in the Catholic family ... back to the practice of their Catholic faith.

The need to do this is great ... the need is everywhere.

The group called "Fallen away Catholics" numbers 13% of the people of America ... making them the second largest group after Catholics at 24% ... and well ahead of the third largest group, the Baptists at 5%.

Here's another example of the need for re-evangelization:

A month ago I was waiting in the lobby for **my Dentist appointment** and **a woman came out having finished her appointment, I greeted her and she asked where my Church was. I said **Gardendale and Warrior** and I asked **where** she went to church.**

She too used those famous words, “*Well, I used to be Catholic, but ...*”

But ... she went a step further.

She said, “*I used to be Catholic ... but I married a previously married man ... and you kicked me out!”*

Since I was wearing my Priestly Clerics, she identified me with the Catholic Church ... and so what she meant was ... the Catholic Church kicked her out.

As you can imagine, **my first impulse was to get defensive ...**
but no, I decided to do what Pope Francis guides us to do ...
refrain from dropping the Atom Bomb ...
and simply meet people where they are.

So I asked her, “*Well, where are you going to Church now?”*

She explained that she originally went with her husband to the **Baptist Church but the **preaching** there didn't resonate with her ... **so now she wasn't going anywhere!****

I said **the Catholic Church** is committed to upholding the teachings of Jesus ... including **His teachings** about the permanence of the Covenant Bond of Marriage.

And I said, “*If you'll approach the Church with your husband's case, there may be a way to have his first marriage annulled, so that your marriage could be blessed in the Church ... and you could come back to the Sacramental life of the Church!”*

She was so pleased to hear this. I asked if she knew any Priests in Birmingham and she mentioned **Fr. Alex Steinmiller, the Principal of Cristo Rey High School. I encouraged her to give him a call and **she thanked me** and **I got the impression** as she left that she would indeed call him to see what's possible!**

This is **re-evangelization!** This is calling Catholics back to the Church.

You can do it too.

In fact it's **your Baptismal Duty** to do this ... **everywhere. ... every day!**

Why do you think **these people stop going to Mass?**

I suspect that **it's this**.

They know ... that **when they marry outside the Catholic Church ...**
regardless of whether their spouse was previously married or not ...
they place themselves outside the sacraments ...
which means they can no longer go to Communion or Confession.

And knowing this, **they** say to themselves,
"If I can't go to Communion ... then why go at all!"

What they've actually done ... is reduce the Mass to the reception of Communion!

Is that true?

Is Mass simply the opportunity to come here to receive Jesus in the Eucharist?

No!

The Mass is way more than just being able to receive Holy Communion.

As we said last week on the Feast of Corpus Christi ...
Mass is the re-presentation of the Redemptive Mystery of Jesus Christ...
that brings infinite glory to the Father ... and untold graces upon us!

The grace of hearing the word of God proclaimed
The grace of hearing the word of God preached ... broken open for your life today
The grace of having your intentions and your very self placed in the paten and
offered to the Father alongside the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist in the
Eucharistic Prayer ... the *greatest most powerful prayer in the world.*
The grace of receiving the Final Blessing of Almighty God at the end of Mass.

Each time people pray the Mass they receive grace!

Consider:

- all **the children** who attend Mass before they receive their **First Communion**.
- all **the RCIA Catechumens and Candidates** who attend Mass
before they are **Baptized and Confirmed**.
- all the millions of people in **hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, the homebound**
who watch the Mass on TV because they're unable to physically attend.

None of them are receiving Holy Communion ... and yet ...
all are receiving great Graces from praying this most powerful prayer ... the Mass!

You know, many uninformed Catholics look at
not being able to receive Communion as a **Penalty**.

Like **the woman** who said, *“You kicked me out.”* _ **She’s feeling penalized!**

Well, it’s a self-inflicted penalty ... that doesn’t have to last forever ... there is a way back.

Withholding **Holy Communion** from **those not validly married in the Church** is simply stating that **something** is preventing you from **full union** at this time.

Like a person that falls into Mortal Sin (such as missing Sunday Mass) they’ve broken their union with God and the Church ... and that has to be addressed in Confession before they can return to receiving the **Sacrament of Holy Communion** that manifests union with **Jesus and His Church**.

But **Mortal Sin** and **unblessed Marriages** should never keep a person from **Mass!**

That’s like saying, *“Well, I’m so sick that I don’t think I’ll go to the Doctor.”*

It’s **those times** that we are **very sick** that we especially need to see the Doctor.

And **Jesus, the Divine Physician, the Doctor of the Soul,** is present at every Mass!

How do we see Him?

Paul tells us today, saying, *“We walk by faith and not by sight.”*

If **Mass to us** is **just about what we see with our eyes** ,
then we’ll be unwilling to go when we can’t receive Communion.

At least the **Communion** gives us a visible manifestation of **His presence**.

But **Jesus** is present regardless of whether or not you receive Him in communion
... and **He’s doing great work** and we’re receiving great graces in his presence!

Given that I’ve already talked about what happened in a Dentist’s office ...
I’d like you to consider this analogy.

Many Dentists reward their Patients with a **brand new Toothbrush** at the end of their visit.

It’s a **nice surprise** and we typically take it home and use it to care for our teeth over the next **6 months** until our next check-up.

Well, what if for some reason your Dentist stopped giving you a Toothbrush at the end of each visit ... **would you stop going to the Dentist?**

**If you do, then you're saying that the Toothbrush was everything to you ...
and all the other things that happened ...
during your Dental exam and treatment ... meant nothing!**

**This would mean that all the drilling that took place to remove decay ...
all the filling of holes to build up a tooth ...
all the polishing of surfaces to make them white ...
would be considered as unimportant.**

Is that true?

**Is your Dental visit all about the Toothbrush
or is the work accomplished there of great value to your oral health?**

You bet it is!

Your regular semi-annual visits to the Dentist ... preserve you from developing serious problems that require crowns and bridges later on.

The Toothbrush you receive at the end is an additional blessing that's meant to be a valuable tool to help you preserve your dental health until the next visit.

It's the same way with the Mass ... there's a lot happening there too!

**And to turn away from your weekly visit to the Divine Physician ...
just because you can't receive Communion ...
is to deny yourself all the purifying and building up and polishing
that Jesus wants to do to your soul!**

**What's there at Mass ... nothing less than the Power and Presence of Jesus!
It's more than a Holy Meal ... it's participating in the Mystery and Majesty of God!**

**Receiving Jesus in Holy Communion is an additional Grace ...
over and above the **the infinite value of the Mass ...****

Holy Communion is the supernatural "*toothbrush*" that helps you preserve your spiritual health ... until your next Sunday visit.

**Yes, the Mass is way more than just Holy Communion!
There's never a reason to miss Mass ... even when you can't receive Communion.**

**Please pass this on to all your family and friends ...
and you'll be living out your Baptismal calling
by engaging in the great work of ... Re-evangelization.**