

Chaplain's Bulletin June 18, 2023



Dear Folks

There are two essential thoughts in our Scriptures this Sunday: that God has given us many great gifts, and the harvest is abundant; laborers are few.

There are a number of sad conversations going on now. Churches are closing. Churches that used to have one or two priests are now sharing priests. Many churches can do less than they used to. Many are struggling.

Many people feel helpless. We are not helpless. God has given us many gifts, and there is so much we can do to make our churches thrive.

What if God is testing us, to see how we will respond to this challenge. To make church happen requires the participation of a lot of people. The question is, how many will respond to this call? There are some who prioritize participation in the church, helping to make good things happen. The question is how many of our people are willing to do that? How many Catholics see themselves as customers and how many see themselves as coworkers in mission?

If a parish is truly building disciples, it will be common for people to see themselves as sharing responsibility for making church happen, and eagerly respond to God's call. If people see that responding to God's call is central to life, that the work of the Church is a huge part of responding to God's call, and that their participation makes a difference, then a parish can thrive.

Trying to do good things in the Church can be frustrating, and I know that as well as anyone. That is part of the challenge. When we are faithful in the midst of obstacles (including annoying and infuriating obstacles), God uses those occasions to deepen our commitment and our holiness. We are called to work with the Church we have, with all its flaws. That is part of discipleship.

As for more priests, we all have a role to play. I would suggest that if a young man grows up surrounded by adults (he sees more than his parents) who are zealously dedicated to growing in holiness, deeply in love with the Eucharist, ravenously hungry to learn more about the faith, and energetic in supporting the mission of the Church, we will have to build a fence around the seminary to keep it from being overrun with applicants.

Part of this is helping direct people's energy. Many do not read my bulletin articles (sigh), and so how others spread the vision is key. When people express complaints about the state of things or worry

about the future, it is important to direct the conversation towards action that can help, even incrementally. Enough drops of water make an ocean.

The harvest is abundant. How many laborers will we have? Our future can be glorious.

Blessings,

Fr. Jim