

## Chaplain's Bulletin July 7, 2024



Dear Folks,

Today in our Gospel (Mark 6:1-6) we see people who don't learn who Jesus is because they think they already know. They apparently figured that since He grew up there, they knew all there was to be known about Him, and so their minds were closed. I find one of the great obstacles to learning is the assumption that we already know. Have you ever started to talk, and before you were done, someone assumes (incorrectly) that they know what you are going to say and so starts responding to this imagined point of view? Isn't it frustrating? Have you ever been caught doing that to someone else? Sometimes we can say what we wanted to say, but their voices are so loud in their heads that they hear what they expected and not what you said.

What some people say about what Christianity is shows a terrible lack of understanding, but they are sure they understand. Several have said that Christianity is just a matter of being good to others. I start to react, and they say, "That's what it boils down to." No, No, No. I heard people say that Christianity and Hinduism teach essentially the same thing, just use different words, so they do both. In the words of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, "No. A thousand gallons of 'No.'" Christianity is a love relationship, a deep friendship, with a God who loves us deeply, tenderly, and faithfully, and has been willing to pay the ultimate price for us. There is not, nor could there ever be a love story equal to that.

Many people are walking around with the notion that what they learned about the faith as children is all they need to know. I think this has a lot to do with why the Church is having so much trouble now. Even if your faith formation as a child was super-excellent (and for many, many people it was not), what would your life be like if you stopped learning about things in general after eighth grade? Many have left the faith, and many remain in a superficial manner, but get their perspectives more from the world than from the faith. If they have adult questions and only a child's answers, how could that not happen?

I think many were taught the faith in such a way they didn't get the sense that it made much difference, so why learn more? I suggest there are several reasons:

1. It enriches our encounters with God. In any love relationship, learning about our beloved helps us connect.
2. It helps us understand how to please God.
3. It pushes us out of our comfort zone. No relationship develops if we are not willing to get out of our comfort zone.
4. It helps us function as members of the Church. Church will still be frustrating because it is so full of us sinful people, but how it works will make more sense.
5. It enables us to witness to the faith better, so more people will want to come and fewer will want to leave.
6. It is just so fascinating! The more I learn, the more amazing it seems and the hungrier I get to learn even more. A thousand lifetimes would not be enough.
7. I suggest our strength as a church in the future will depend a lot on how much people keep learning about the faith.

Blessings,

Fr. Jim