

November 16, 2020

I have been dreaming about Mass, Sunday Mass, lately, not as it is, but as it was. Mostly in the dream I am bent down listening to a child telling me what “they want God to bless our world with this week.”

But the dream ends before I can get what they say.

Most of you are staying away from what Sunday Mass is in these times and I think that is a healthy choice, both physical and mental health, but especially spiritual. Our individual relationship with God is not based on geography or location, the Holy Spirit is given to us freely without pre-existing conditions and that Spirit keeps us in communion with the Father and the Son, being in Church is not necessary for that.

We come to Church I hope because we choose to come.

We bring our prejudices, our biases, our incompletenesses as all of us are on the way, we are pilgrims and sojourners seeking and when we see one another and hear one another and are with one another in the intentional way that we were, we find we are not alone in that seeking and we get the strength from the Eucharist which is not simply “going to Communion,” we get the strength to keep seeking and not despair.

Sunday Liturgy I learned years ago from my wonderful teacher, Father Thomas Reardon, needs to be an attractive human experience if it is to give glory and praise to God as Saint Irenaeus taught all those many years ago, “The Glory of God is man fully alive.”

Sunday Mass in these days has become utilitarian not a celebration except in the most esoteric of theological minds. Watching the priest “do stuff” is not the Mass that we have celebrated in our parish, not at all.

Certainly, you are welcome to come to Mass but that, in my mind, does not trump common sense and our responsibility to the health of our neighbors in this time of pandemic, as Jesus clearly and unambiguously teaches, “You cannot love God whom you do not see, if you do not love your neighbor whom you do see.”

Community, relationship, and intentional presence are human needs and human capabilities, the tools of assembling lives that have meaning and purpose.

We come together to Mass welcoming all to hear the Words that tell of our origin, our destiny, and our reason for being. We struggle to be faithful and loving and hopeful and when we fail we take heart that somebody else picks up our slack.

The solitary pieties worked out to serve individual needs and give credence to self-conscious religious practice are not what Jesus had in mind when he said, "Do this in memory of me," not at all. Mass is not a private piety but a community "being" however briefly and imperfectly what Christ calls together not what a priest does.

What Jesus wanted done was a surrendering of our egocentric sense of being above the least of the children of God. Sunday Mass can help us do that by seeing and realizing that we are but a part of a larger whole and not a whole anything on our own.

The consequences of our Sunday Masses as they are, will carry far reaching and long-lasting damage, I suspect.

Even though I go to Church and I celebrate Mass, I look at it as a kind of penance, a fasting and abstaining, in anticipation of the Great Banquet to come when I can hear clearly what our children, "want God to bless our world with this week."

We should not take the easy route and make our own "golden calves" as our ancestors did in the desert after 40 years of wandering nor should we succumb to the temptations to have our fill to hell with everyone else, we should resist those temptations to just get what we can get as Jesus did after his 40 days in the desert.

Our fasting from Mass is going to be longer than Jesus' fasting but not as long as our ancestors in the desert.

Be of good cheer because we are in good company in anticipating what we hunger do not settle for imitation substitutes of our own devices.