

**“So what do we do now?”**

This Sunday we celebrate the Solemnity of the Ascension of Our Lord. This is a special weekend to preach on this topic here at St. Patrick’s because of our large stain glass window that depicts this event in living and vibrant colour.

One of the characters in the painting has always caught my attention. I sit right beside him each week and over these past nine years, I feel as if we have developed a special bond.

He is one of the nameless disciples in the bottom corner of the picture. He is experiencing firsthand the Ascension of our Lord.

As modern-day followers of the Christ we know the rest of the story. We understand that in only a few days’ time, these disciples will be visited by the one Christ called the Advocate. They will be filled with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

However, in the scene captured in this window, my friend in the corner does not know this. I imagine him looking over at the disciple closest to him and with arms open he simply asks, **“So what do we do now?”**

It is a good question. Let me offer two words that are critical to helping us find our answer to it: Courage and Trust.

St. Paul provides some advice about what we do now when he tells us “[to] hold unwaveringly to our confession that gives us hope, for he who made the promise is trustworthy.”

What is that promise? Matthew’s gospel offers some insight.

After instructing us to go and make disciples of all the earth Jesus leaves us a promise. He tells us “that he is with us until the end of the age.”

**So what do we do now?** We start by believing that Christ is trustworthy and he is continually keeping his promise to be with us until the end of the age.

As Catholics we are truly blessed to know the ongoing presence of Jesus in our lives through the gift of the mass. Pope Paul VI said the mass is the most perfect prayer.

However, let’s be completely honest about it. For many of us, the mass is either something someone who has the power of the family keys drags us to each week, or it is a habit we developed over the years.

Bishop Fulton Sheen in a 30-minute homily I posted on my blog this week admits that many of the younger folks in his 1960's congregation complain that they get nothing out of mass.

Bishop Sheen looks at them and us straight in the eye, and bluntly asserts that if we get nothing out of the mass; it is because we bring nothing to it.

***So what do we do now?*** One thing may well be to spend some time studying, thinking and praying about the mass.

As Catholics we have this time where we come together, and if we have the courage to believe deeply we will know that it is in the mass that Jesus fulfills his promise to be with us until the end of the age.

Jesus clearly wanted us to gather as a community of believers. The mass begins by collecting us as a community. Our time together here this morning is not a time of private prayer. It is instead a gathering of his followers.

We share our story in the reading of the word and the singing of the psalms.

One of us does the best we can to relate this story to our lives today in a homily.

The homily, however, is NOT the mass. It is not the thing that makes this time together special. It can help add meaning, but if you are not getting anything out of mass, it is not the fault of the homilist.

These feelings of indifference or boredom during mass are more than likely the result of not understanding and then entering fully into the next part of the mass- the Consecration.

Think about what it is we say we believe as Catholics. The offerings are brought forward- bread and wine.

They are placed on the altar. Each of us is now invited to join in the fellowship of this table. When the priest says the words, this is my body, this is my blood, we are invited to die with Christ in that moment.

On this altar each of us is called by Christ, who is with us until the end of the age, to put all of our fears, shame, guilt, prejudices and false images of who we are on the table and let them die with Christ.

This takes courage because believe it or not most of us like to cling to these images of ourselves because they excuse us from having to change.

I am too: fill the blank; I could never: fill in the blank; I am not worthy.

Of course, we are not worthy. We will pray that fact right after the consecration. Lord I am not worthy .... but, only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

What do we do now? Accept the paradox that we are not worthy of this brother we call Christ, but he will always say the word if we trust enough to ask, and then we can be healed.

There is nothing you can ever do to be unworthy in Christ's eyes. Come to the table and die with Christ, and you shall be healed.

We rise again after this death on the altar in our communion. Communion is not a private prayer. It is when we join with the others in our community and when we hear the words' Body of Christ', we say loudly, amen- yes we believe.

Now I know some of you like to leave us a bit early but our mass; our community celebration is not quite over after you receive communion.

If you study the mass, I can actually understand why you might want to leave after communion. Even those who stay faithfully, perhaps judging those who have already departed, may not fully understand that the second most important words of the mass are about to be proclaimed.

Go in Peace, Glorifying the Lord by your life.

In reality the mass can only be boring if we lack the courage to be transformed by leaving our fears, guilt and shame on the altar. The impact of the mass can only be limited by our unwillingness to become the light of Christ in the world.

***So what do we do now? We can prepare!***

Next week is Pentecost. Jesus knows that what he is asking of us as his disciples is not easy.

***We can pray to the Holy Spirit for the gift of wisdom*** so that we may learn how to bring our whole lives to the mass each week.

***We can pray to the Holy Spirit for the gift of understanding*** so we can allow ourselves to be transformed by the experience of the mass.

And this week ***we can pray to the Holy Spirit for the gift of courage*** to truly go in peace glorifying the Lord by our lives.