

July 23-24, 2016

Thoughts from the pastor,

So many of us have family members who have left the Church or lost their faith in God. We pray for them constantly. In my homily last week I opened the door to a discussion of this topic. My main reason is that I am praying that a small crack may have appeared as an opportunity for me to try to talk about God with my family. As I prepare for that foreseeable event, I am going to share some of my thoughts in upcoming homilies. With Fr. Don gone for the next three weekends it gives me a chance to speak at all the Masses each weekend and build on this theme.

Many of you have asked how you will be able to follow that theme as you head out on your vacations and trips over the next few weeks. I recorded last week's homily and will eventually have it on the parish web-site. I will do the same for the next few weeks but they will not be on the web-site right away so I will have the opportunity to work with my family first. But I will be having a little shorter time-delay in terms of the topics within these letters in the bulletin. They will have a brief outline of the homily but a week later. So for those of you who missed last week, here is a little of what you missed last week.

I am using a book that God pushed in my lap a month ago and said: "Read this." That happens to me occasionally. The book is: Introduction to Christianity by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, who is better known to most of us now as Pope Benedict. The book is not the easiest read but it does give clear points within a very organized format on how to understand what we believe as Catholics.

He starts with a story that I shared in my homily about a clown who worked with a circus. The clown realized that a fire was raging out of control and heading right toward a village that the circus had just left. He ran into the village and tried to warn the people of the impending danger but, because they only saw him as a clown, they did not believe him but thought that he was just doing another act. They laughed and laughed, until it was too late and they all died in the blaze.

Cardinal Ratzinger uses this image to illustrate how priests feel as they warn people about the reality of hell. They laugh at our antics which have been mocked in movies and other media. They see us as ridiculous in our vestments because the message that there is no hell has been put into their heads over and over. Since they can't see the blaze until it is too late, many of them never accept the message. This is the dilemma that many of you feel right along with the priests as we look at what is going on in our family and friends who have rejected faith in Jesus Christ. As Catholics we even have a patron Saint for this situation, St. Monica. She prayed and used every tactic she could think of to convince her son, Augustine, to turn from his sinful ways and accept the Lord.

What I am going to present in the next few weeks is not going to be a magic formula that is guaranteed to work. If I had that, I would be the one speaking at the Ralston Arena rather than Matthew Kelly. He goes all over the world to do this same thing. Many of you have read his books and even tried to pass them on to your brethren who have left the Catholic Faith.

What I am offering is another plea to the Holy Spirit, who can change hearts, along with a summarized approach that is similar to Cardinal Ratzinger. I will look at it in a way that is similar to how I gently challenge young couples who are approaching marriage in our church. Each person's journey is different and with a series of questions I try to find out where they might have formed a wall in defense against the faith. Then I help them look at that wall to see if it actually makes sense. So stay tuned.

God bless you,  
Fr. Frank