

A Letter from Our Pastoral Coordinator October 14, 2018



May Christ's peace, joy and hope be with you all!

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

I subscribe to a daily/monthly Catholic devotional, *Give Us This Day*, published by Liturgical Press, a work of Saint John's Benedictine Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota. In the October issue, the editor, Mary Stommes, wrote an article in which I thought you might appreciate. I believe that Mary has a great deal of insight for all of us.

Once upon a time, people came in droves to see a Man from Galilee. They came to be healed and forgiven and loved. They came asking questions about God and heaven, about life and death. Often as not, he answered these big questions using the simplest of images and stories. A tiny mustard seed, a measure of yeast, a sprinkle of salt. A lost coin or a lost sheep. A son who drifted away and a father crazy with joy upon his return.

People were crazy about these stories, crazy in love with the son of God who told them.

But his style didn't sit well with everyone. Some objected, resisted, asked questions in order to trap him. "We've never done it this way" was already a thing once upon that time.

Tradition matters deeply, the Messiah insisted, but imagines what happens if you put new wine into old wineskins. It's a total mess, So hold onto tradition, but pay attention to the new, the gift of God within each and every one of you – most especially the least among you.

Can you hear the murmuring in the background? It echoes through the ages. This way of teaching is causing scandal and confusion. It waters down our sacred deposit of faith. It will lead to a crisis of catechesis. Orthodoxy might go out the window, and relativism will come rushing in. People will abandon the faith in droves. Maybe. But maybe it's the murmuring that turns people away. Maybe it's that we as Church have all the right answers but don't listen to the questions. Maybe people drift away because it doesn't seem to them that many Church-goers are in love with Jesus.

Or life. Or much of anything. Maybe people – young and old – don't feel drawn toward a community that

sees them as lost and wayward souls, a problem to be fixed.

Would that we could see "potential" rather than "problem in all the baptized. That we would name and nurture the God-given talent in ourselves and others. It's the purpose of this month's gathering in Rome, the "Synod on Young People, the faith and *Vocational Discernment*." Remember the second part and the purpose of this important conversation: to explore how we can "lead young people to recognize and accept the call to the fullness of life and love."

It's a lofty goal, one that can be realized only if we admit our present "vocations crisis" might be our impoverished sense of vocation. Only if we have the humility to be challenged by the questions and gifts of others. Only if we acknowledge that when it comes to matters of faith, no one has all the answers. And everyone has questions.

Once upon a time, people came to Church in droves. We long for that time. But why? That's a serious question. If not to love and serve them, to listen to help them flourish – then no wonder all our hand wringing and finger-wagging is going unanswered. We might be trying to strong arm the Holy Spirit and missing the most serious question of all:

Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?

Then feed my lambs and tend my sheep. I am crazy in love with all of you.

God's great love, hope and mercy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deacon Jim". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Deacon Jim Fish, Pastoral Coordinator
Holy Rosary and Visitation parishes
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Mary Stommes, "The Most Serious Question," from the October 2018 issue of *Give Us This Day* www.giveusthisday.org (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2018). Used with permission.