

On the 18th of April in the year of our Lord 1918 Clifton Keith Hillegass entered the world, in the usual way, in Rising City, Nebraska. Clifton grew, went on to finish college, and then took a job with a book distributor. Through his work contact Clifton became friends with a one Jack Cole who wrote study guides in Canada and suggested to Clifton he should give it a go in the U.S. He did and CliffNotes was born in the summer of 1958.

On the 5th of May 2001, at age 83, Mr. Clifton Hillegass died but his death left us with an icon that, even in today's cyber world, continues to exist.

In our Gospel reading today we are given St. Mark's own CliffNotes version of Christ's ministry – at least from one perspective. Throughout His teachings, Christ amazed and angered people everywhere he preached, just as he did in the account of his last visit to his home town of Nazareth. Jesus is quoted by Mark as saying, “A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house.” (Mark 6:4) So there we have our own Biblical CliffNotes on the ministry of Christ. Amazed people everywhere He went, but disappointed and angry people as well. Both hearing the same teaching of the Word but so many rejecting it not only back home but, in the region, and His country as well. Guess those prophets really aren't so welcomed.

This comes into more focus as we focus on a key word Christ used by Christ in describing Himself, prophet. A prophet, back in the day as now, was not necessarily a welcomed person to hang around with. They more often than not, were preaching of judgments to come and how our ways of living are not proper, correct, or just. It was not that people did not believe them as much as, possibly, they just didn't want to be reminded of their own personal failings and needs to change. I honestly think that is often why people avoid church – not because they lack faith, but rather know that they have not properly lived their faith, are too lazy or unwilling to change, and don't want to be reminded of it. To give a more modern example of a prophet both embraced and rejected simultaneously, I hold up Martin Luther King, Jr. Here was a modern prophet that held a mirror of truth to a nation and many did not want to see the stark truth and evil that was in, with, and around us. It was too hard, the change too great, but the message was delivered and slowly, oh too slowly, change has occurred. And God willing, it will continue to occur – we must pray that it does!

In reflecting on the change of attitude from the gathering, His neighbors, family and friends; Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith. There were two things Jesus often found Himself amazed at; the faith people displayed and the lack there of.

We often have that problem today, not wanting to hear how we should best apply our faith to the daily grind of life as it often is not in harmony with how we live our lives. We find it much easier to listen to those that would offer prosperity preaching that tells us we can have what we want, and everything is just great. Maybe things are good in our lives, but maybe there is room for a little faith improvement as well. Going back to our brief comments on Dr. King, I feel we can all agree that the work is not over. God's work is never over.

“May our hearts and minds be opened to hear and understand the prophecies of the Scriptures! May our hearts and minds be inspired to discern true prophets from those who come to us disguised in sheep's clothing. Such false prophets distract us from the compassion and mercy and loving kindness of God's work with us.”

(Carol & Dennis Keller dkeller002@nc.rr.com)

And God is constantly working within us and through us. I see it all the time in so many simple little ways on how God uses us to spread the Word, give hope, and sew the seeds of love.

My dear family look for God in your life.

Know you are so very special to our awesome God and loved without measure. Believe that, please, as it is the Gospel truth.

That acceptance of your own value and worth may then lead each of us to be even more open to the possibilities that God has for us in regard to bringing forth God's mission to the world.

You may not even know the full picture of what you do when you work for the good of God. You may not see the fruit of the seeds you plant but that is okay. Christ asks us to live our faith authentically. We spread the Word through conversation and dialog, yes, but we are even more productive is doing it through our deeds.

Being the hands and feet of Jesus Christ.

As such, if we are planting seeds, it is the Holy Spirit that is watering and nurturing them. Sometimes, as I alluded to earlier, we get to see those seeds flourish and grow.

Have you ever seen this?

Have you ever seen your efforts, outreach, ministry, and witness have an amazing effect on someone else?

It is a sight to behold and a feeling of immense joy, I can surely testify to that!

Let your time here together be a time to gain knowledge and strength so that your time away can be your productive and active time working on the behalf of God. Being those hands and feet of Christ, we so often talk about.

“Jesus received his strength from his interactions with the [Creator]. We, too, must stay connected to our Triune God and the many messengers of the Word in our midst. When we feel discouraged or ineffective, let us remember Calvary but focus on the Resurrection. Then let us parent, teach, minister, lead, and care with all the strength that each receives!” (Dr. Lanie LeBlanc OP - Southern Dominican Laity)

Let us do this with the burning love of Christ in our hearts. Let us do this with an authentic love of our neighbors and with the purest of intent.

Now, let us once again, receive Christ into our hearts through the Eucharist and transform sacramental blessing into loving actions of faith.

AMEN