August 4, 2019: Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

While I was on vacation, I saw two interesting quotes that got me thinking. The first one came from Henry Ford. It was on a sign in front of a business, and read, “Don’t find fault, find a remedy; anybody can complain.” The second was on a T-shirt, and I do not know whom it is attributed, but it read, “Attitudes are contagious—is yours worth catching?”

As we face life’s many challenges, we can find a myriad of ways to tackle the problems that confront us. But, if we are honest with ourselves, we often can fall into the trap of simply recognizing what is wrong and not trying to find a resolution. As we face the reality of the many issues with the Church, and the changes we are faced with as a community of faith, it is easy to find fault. But the real sign of faith is recognizing that the challenges we face are not problems, but opportunities. They are opportunities for us to become God’s instruments in dealing with the difficulties that lay before us. And so, we need to ask ourselves: are we going to be part of the problem or part of the solution? Every situation we encounter in our lives—if we are open to it—is a moment to encounter God’s grace and become his vessel of grace in the lives of others.

It simply comes down to deciding on what attitude we want to reflect to the world. I consider myself incredibly blessed to be pastor of our two communities of faith. Over the last four years we have accomplished many great things together. But there is so much more that we need to do. I am sure we all recognize that there are not nearly as many people in our churches today as there were 15, 20, or 30+ years ago. The statistics we face in the decline of people attending church are truly daunting, and it is not just the Catholic Church that is dealing with this issue. But we will focus on ourselves. We can all point to many different reasons for the decline in attendance. And, most likely, all of the reasons on our list have contributed to the situation we presently find ourselves in as a community of faith. But the real question then arises—what are we going to do about it? As Henry Ford said: it is easy to complain—anyone can do that. So... are we ready as a community to hear the voice of the Lord and do something to rectify our situation? God depends on us to be his hands and feet. He depends on us to give voice to his words. He depends on us to express his love to our brothers and sisters.

Throughout the whole bible God continually called his people to act out their faith. And God continues to call his people. He calls us not simply to be aware of a problem but to work diligently in bringing about a solution. We must become like Isaiah the prophet: “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?’ ‘Here I am,’ I said; ‘Send me!’” God is calling each and every one of us to act now. He is calling each and every one of us to become part of his plan of salvation. No one is allowed to sit on the sidelines. It must, of course, begin with prayer. We must seek the Lord and allow Him to direct our hearts, minds and lives, in order to become his instruments.

What do you see happening in the Church that you think should not be happening? Ask yourself first why you think this. Then bring it to prayer and see if God agrees with you. If you feel called to act, then ask yourself what it is that God is calling you to do. And do it!

One of the ways we can test ourselves is to look to the scriptures and teachings of the Church. God will never call us to do something that contradicts his eternal truth. But at the same time, He may call us to do something that challenges our own perceptions, and that forces us to both grow in our faith and bring his challenge into the lives of others.

The real question we need to ask ourselves is: are we simply going to sit on the sidelines, talking about all that is wrong and doing nothing about it? Or, are we going to allow God to use us to bring about the changes He wants. It will all come down to the attitude we choose to take on.

So... if attitudes are contagious, is yours worth catching?

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@chelmsfordcatholic.org.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

Fr. Brian