**February 2, 2020: Presentation of the Lord**

In November I was asked by the Seminary if I would teach a course for them on RCIA. It was probably not the best decision, but I agreed to do it. Developing a course is not a simple process, or at least for me, it is not a simple process. First, you need to determine the goals you want to achieve. What is it that you want the students to walk away with when you are done? Then it becomes necessary to decide on the flow of the material: in other words, what should be presented each week. Obviously, it is important to have a logical flow so that one week builds on another, helping you to achieve your goals. Furthermore, choosing the materials to be read and how to present the subject matter through notes and Power Point presentations for each class is essential. It is important to ensure a coherent approach is delivered in order to achieve the objectives for the course. In this particular class the students will also practice both presiding and preaching, and so I will need to give adequate time for this. In addition, I will need to determine how I will grade their performance as objectively as possible. Finally, how do I grade their overall knowledge of the material? When I taught my first class, I was honest with the students: this is a work in progress.

When it comes to teaching, I like to have a better sense of how things are going to develop than I really have at this moment. But, sometimes it is necessary to trust where the process seems to be leading you. The reality is that I have the knowledge and background to teach RCIA and its liturgical components. I understand what is necessary for good presiding and good preaching. But, it is helpful to have a grasp on how it will all piece together into a true tapestry that allows for real learning.

God has given us all particular gifts, and true humility is not about denying that we have those gifts, but rather, embracing and thanking God for them. We will often get placed in uncomfortable situations and will not be sure about the best way forward. It is in these moments that we should depend on God the most, and recognize that the best way forward is to stay focused on Christ. It is in these moments that we are called to walk on water. It is easy to feel the wind, and see the waves, and allow these things to distract us. It is easy to become focused on what we do not have—what talents we are lacking. It is easy to think that we are being called to do something truly beyond our abilities. But, if Christ calls us out of the boat, then He sees something in us that tells Him we can do it.

Our biggest problem in any given situation is believing that we truly know ourselves. The reality is that only God truly knows us. He can read our hearts in ways that we do not have the capacity to. It is like the story of Saint Paul. Saint Paul was a persecutor of the Church and was determined to destroy the Church. He condescended at the death of St. Stephen. He arrested people and had them prosecuted for their faith in Jesus. When he was heading to Damascus, he had one goal in mind—to root out as many Christians as possible and drag them back to Jerusalem for trial. He thought he was doing the right thing and would do all in his power to achieve his goal. But... a funny thing happened on the road to Damascus. He met Jesus!

The world looked at Paul in a particular way. He was a great Pharisee! He was a devote Jew, he lived his faith with conviction, and he followed the law to the letter, ensuring all that he did was in accord with the teachings of scripture. Paul also saw himself in this way. He would be the great scourge of those who defiled the truth of the Torah by following Jesus. It was clear to Paul and to the world who he was, what his gifts were, and how God meant for him to use those gifts.

The problem for Paul and the world is that God saw something very different in him. God looked into the heart of Paul and recognized his true gifts and talents. When God spoke to Ananias, He told him to go and baptize Paul. Ananias responded, essentially: Lord I know about this guy and he is a big problem. God’s response was simple: “I have chosen him to be my messenger to the Gentiles.” What the world could not see, what Paul could not see, God could see. Paul, of course, became the greatest missionary the Church has ever had. Not only did Paul bring the message of Christ to the Gentiles, but the very words he wrote entered into our scriptures. Paul’s writings were important because God saw another one of his gifts. Paul was so open to the Holy Spirit and had penetrated so deeply the mysteries of our faith that his very writings have been recognized as God’s own words. When it comes to our faith and morals, they are without error. And, they have become a bedrock for our properly understanding the teachings of Christ.

It is clear, both in Paul’s writings and in the Acts of the Apostles, that Paul was not certain of why he was called. But, it is not a question about our having all the answers. Rather, it is about our willingness to hear the call of the Lord and to follow. We need to recognize that God can read our hearts in ways we do not understand, and we simply need to trust.
The world may see us one way. We may see ourselves another way. But, what really matters is how God sees us. We have the best opportunity to discover what God sees in us when we are called out of the boat to walk on water.

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