



Proper Focus by Joe Sixpack

A Jesuit, a Dominican, and a Franciscan were walking along an old road, debating the greatness of their orders. Suddenly, an apparition of the Holy Family appeared in front of them, with Jesus in a manger and Mary and Joseph praying over him. The Franciscan fell on his face, overcome with awe at the sight of God born in such poverty. The Dominican fell to his knees, adoring the beautiful reflection of the Trinity and the Holy Family. The Jesuit walked up to Joseph, put his arm around his shoulder, and said, "So, have you thought about where to send him to school?"

You have to admit this is funny... and the Jesuit offers a stereotypical Jesuit reaction to the apparition. But I chose to lead with this joke to make a point about proper focus.

Some of the priests from our deanery recently formed a committee made up of lay members from each of their parishes. Their mandate is to focus on and make plans to be implemented for local evangelization and our Catholic schools, because the deanery priests realize we're moving into an ever-changing social landscape where the "old ways" no longer work. While I most certainly agree with this committee formation in concept, I'm equally convinced the end result will be failure. (I pray I'm wrong!)

Human nature being as predictable as it is, I'm anticipating this committee to focus on all the wrong things. The laity who make up the committee, I predict, will focus on these questions: "How do we gain more students in our schools?" "How do we raise money to keep the schools open without raising tuition?" "How do we get lapsed Catholics to begin attending Mass again so we can increase collections?" "How do we motivate our parishioners to get people attending Mass again and at the same time enroll their kids in our schools?"

Yeah, the focus will overwhelmingly be on Catholic schools rather than evangelization. And be sure that their idea of evangelization is somehow getting people back at Mass so collections will increase for the support of the parishes. It's important to note the emphasis and discussion will be on money, tuition, and enrollment... as it always seems to be. I'm not saying the priests of the deanery would want this to be the focus of the laity they appointed. I only know two of the priests, and I can state definitively that neither of them would promote such thinking, so presumably the others wouldn't either.

Look, I'm a convert, and I've been in evangelization for 30 years. I understand from my experiences in helping hundreds of souls into the Church that focusing on the temporal isn't what grabs people. The only thing that will grab people is preaching and teaching Jesus, and Jesus alone!

Sixty years ago, there wasn't a parish in America facing financial trouble, much less the insolvency we see so often today. But back then, Catholics knew and understood their faith. I've lived in this archdiocese four years now, and I can count on one hand the number of people who could tell me how many sacraments there are, much less name them. I've had life-long Mass attenders tell me they didn't know it was a sin to get drunk, masturbate, or use artificial contraception. Why? *They never were taught the faith!* It's not just my diocese that's infected; it's that way everywhere I've ever been. And the blame game for who's responsible for that is superfluous, as the damage is done and we're left now to pick up the pieces.

The above mentioned committee can only be successful if they come up with the means to educate the laity and make certain that Catholic school teachers are teaching the faith to our young—wholly orthodox and completely. Then they can easily achieve the goals I predict they'll focus on. An informed laity is a vibrant laity, on fire for Christ.

I know it will pain you to admit it, but what I've described here is also a malady in your diocese. Oh, sure, there's the occasional parish full of fired up Catholics who know and understand the faith, but chances are you're not in one. You're reading this, in fact, because your pastor wants me to help him give you a deeper knowledge and understanding of the faith. After all, you can't live what you don't know!

I want you to do something right now for yourself and Jesus. I want you to ask yourself three questions: 1. How many sacraments are there? 2. What are they called? 3. What is the purpose of each one? If you can't answer all three questions off the top of your head, I want you to do something else for yourself and Jesus.

Every week, I offer free online webinars—or online meetings. I sit down with you and your family through the wonders of the internet. I teach everything you could ever want or need to know about the Catholic faith. I teach everything from the basics of the faith to Catholic spirituality to Church history to apologetics. When I teach Catholic morality, I don't just give you a list of dos and don'ts; I explain *why* a thing is right or wrong. I *prove* the existence of God. I *prove* Jesus is God. I *prove* that Jesus founded the Catholic Church, and that everybody has an obligation to belong to it. I *prove* that the Holy Eucharist is Jesus' body, blood, soul and divinity, so you can never again think you're just receiving a wafer when you go to Communion.

Learn! Understand! Live what you learn and understand! Go to JoeSixpackAnswers.com now and enter your name and email address into the form on the right hand side of the page to begin a life changing journey—a *free* life changing journey. In 30 years of sharing the Catholic faith, I've never once witnessed anyone yawn or appear bored. Instead, they get excited, because they quickly discover Catholicism is the most exciting lived experience there is! And, as always, you can ask me any Catholic question you want... but live and in person during the webinar.

I look forward to having you!