

PROGRESS REPORT ON OUR PARISH ARK (09/08/2024)

(23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time)

Summer has ended, and as we move into fall, I want to talk to you about our parish ark. It was a little over two years ago that we inaugurated the ark. Since then, we have created more times for prayer with extended hours for Adoration at both Saint Patrick's and Saint Luke's, and we have established a number of small groups for prayer, study and fellowship. I will say more about those in a few moments.

As you may recall, two years ago, I made the point that we need a parish ark because our society is collapsing around us. Sanity and common sense have left us and devotion to God and love of neighbor are rapidly disappearing.

In the midst of this, we need each other's support as we strive to follow our Lord Jesus Christ and to live as He has taught us to live. We cannot resist the influence of our new pagan culture alone. It's like trying to face down a tornado. It can't be done.

To that end, I proposed that, just like Noah, we build an ark, a parish ark. Only in this case, our ark will not be built from material things, from wood and metal and so on, but rather with spiritual things, with our faith, hope and love. And, the end result will not be a physical ship, but rather a spiritual ship which radiates truth and goodness and beauty.

Together, we can build such a thing. Together we can build this spiritual ark which will support us and protect us and provide us with hope and joy in the midst of a fallen world.

You know, the opposite of truth and goodness and beauty (all things inspired by our Catholic faith), are lies, evil and ugliness. Without going into much detail, I would ask you, what do we see more of these days? Do you see truth and goodness and beauty or lies and evil and ugliness? I don't know about you, but I think it's the latter.

I will give you just one example to make my point. It's something I mention in my bulletin article this week. It's the coarsen of public speech. Words that were once considered taboo and inappropriate to utter in public because they would be a bad example for children and offend the dignity of women are now being used with no shame.

I saw a bumper sticker the other day with the words "F... Joe Biden." No matter what your politics are, this is wrong. School age children and young girls and boys are randomly using these words in public and shouting them out at each other in anger.

This is simply one more example along with the pornography, the stupidity and evilness of transgenderism, the lies, and the rejection of God's laws that has transformed our nation.

So what to do? Well, first we must face facts, and the first fact is this. We are in a battle, a battle between good and evil, and this battle, this war has been going on ever since Satan and his devils rebelled against God. That said, we must all choose a side. There is no place for neutrality here. You must be on the side of God, or on the side of the devil. You can't sit out the war.

Second, we who are trying to be faithful to God and to keep the Commandments and to live a moral life are in the minority. This is evident from the polls which show a rapid decline in those who profess to be Christians in our nation. In the 1990s, about 90% of the population claimed to be Christian. Today, that figure has fallen to 63%, from 9 out of 10 people to a little more than 6 out of 10.

However, that's not the whole story. Many of those who claim to be Christians reject basic moral teachings like the respect for life and that intimacy belongs in marriage where marriage is defined as between one man and one woman.

In fact, recent votes to legalize abortion in Kentucky, Ohio and Kansas indicate that only about a third of the population is pro-life.

A third fact is this. Trying to stand against the tide of this new paganism by yourself won't work. You cannot do it alone. There are too many forces that surround us opposing truth and goodness and beauty. You simply cannot isolate yourself and your family from all of this. Again, as just one example, the vulgarity of public speech which I just pointed out.

However, together we can do something. Together, we can help each other to live our faith. Together we can support a culture of truth and goodness and beauty, a culture that is faithful to God and one which nurtures our faith and where we can build good friendships that will help us lead moral lives.

Hence our parish ark. Together, we can and are supporting each other as we walk down the road that leads to eternal life, along the way of the Lord Jesus. Together, we are building a place where love of God and neighbor are practiced. Together we are building a fire in the darkness that will serve as a beacon for those who are seeking the truth in the midst of a corrupt generation.

So far, there are now almost 50 people spending an hour before the Lord each week in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. They are praying for themselves, their families, our parish, our nation and our world.

Their prayers help sustain us all. Furthermore, time like this in prayer with God helps to focus our lives on what's most important. It helps clear our heads and strengthen our resolve to do good and to be good.

I want to challenge those of you who may not have thought about doing something like this to try it. Especially, you men. Fighting in this spiritual war is demanding. Opposing the forces of evil and defending your families and protecting the innocent requires an inner strength that you will get nowhere else but in prayer.

Most of the men in our society have grown soft and flabby. They don't have the strength, courage and moral fortitude to resist evil and to fight in this war. They have just let our world drift into darkness without lifting a finger.

I would encourage you men to not be among these weaklings, but to be strong, you need time with God. You need to pray. So, make it a point to come to adoration for a time each week.

The other thing we have done is to establish small groups where we can gather together as brothers and sisters in Christ, to pray and study and support each other in Christian friendship.

Before we started building our parish ark, we already had several small groups. These included the Militia of the Immaculata, the Lay Carmelites and the Women's Book Club.

To these we have added a prayer group that meets after Mass on Wednesday mornings, a Bible study that meets on Tuesday mornings after Mass, Bible study groups that meet every other week on Sunday evenings at both Saint Luke's and Saint Patrick's. A Spanish language Bible study that meets monthly at Saint Luke's. A group for Mom's with young children and one for Dad's with young children. A group for young adults. A group that meets early on Saturday mornings, and the men's club led by Deacon Jim.

Again, I would urge you to join one of these groups. There is something for everyone. For singles, couples, men, women, young and old.

We all need to come in out of the spiritual darkness and cold that surrounds us to a place where there is light and goodness and where people are in love with God and trying to be good.

Here I would especially urge those of you who are middle age to join a group. I know you are busy with teenagers and work and everything else, and you are probably thinking I have no more time. However, you can never outdo God in generosity. The more you give to Him, the more He will give to you. If you give Him some of your time, He will find more time for you to get done what you need to do.

One more thing about our small groups. They are not set in stone. Depending on what God wants, some will grow and others will not. It may turn out that some are not needed. At the same time, it may be that we will need to establish other groups. So, if you look over the list and find there isn't one that fits your needs or your schedule, I would be happy to help you start one that does. By the way, you can find a list of our small groups on our website.

At the end of Mass, the priest or deacon often says to you, "Go and proclaim the Gospel of the Lord." These words are not a suggestion. They are a command. We are the Lord's modern Apostles. It is our job to bring our faith into the world and to reveal to others the truth and goodness and beauty of the Lord.

Today, four in ten people have not heard about Jesus and many others who have do not know what He has taught. Who will tell them?

As individuals, we cannot save the world, but together we can build an ark where the lights are on and it is warm and dry in the face of the darkness and storms of our pagan world. That place will be attractive, and those who are seeking the truth will come. So, I urge all of you to roll up your sleeves and get to work and help to build our parish ark. Amen.