

Commentary to the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Don't Just Look Busy, Be Busy



Today's Gospel reading reminds me of the old story of the apparition on the corner of Main and Market in a busy city. It was Saturday morning when Fr. Pascucci heard a knock on the rectory door and an extremely excited lady said, "The Lord has appeared on the corner of Main and Market." Father was in the process of trying to decide if she was suffering from stress or whatever, when a second person came running, "Father, father, the Lord has appeared on the corner of Main and Market." "When?" Fr. Pascucci asked. "He's there right now," they both answered. So Fr. Pascucci went down the block where a large crowd had formed, and sure enough, he saw Jesus. After a while the Lord left. Fr. Pascucci didn't know what to do, so he called a monsignor friend of his. His friend told him to call the bishop. So Father Pascucci called the bishop and told him the news, "The Lord has appeared on the corner of Main and Market. What should I do if he comes back?" The bishop thought for a while and then told Fr. Pascucci he'd get back to him. The bishop then called Rome, and, being an important bishop, he got the pope. "Holy Father, he said, one of my priests, Fr. Pascucci, reports that the Lord has appeared on the corner of Main and Market in his parish. He wants to know what he should do in case the Lord comes back." After a few moments the pope replied, "Tell Fr. Pascucci to look busy."

Good advice for us all. The Lord is coming back. How should we prepare? Not just by looking busy, but by being busy.

There is a lot to keep us busy. People are seeking meaning in life. We Christians, Catholics, have been given the gift of recognizing the reason for existence. The answer to all questions is simple: the answer to all questions is Jesus. We can provide the answer by our attitude in life. We have to be devoted to the Lord, out there, here among us, here within each of us. This complicated world of ours becomes very simple when we make it clear to ourselves that we are enriched by the presence of the Lord. As I come to a deeper understanding of Jesus' presence in my life, as you come to a deeper understanding of his presence in your lives, then He becomes the pearl of great value that the merchant in the Gospel parable sacrifices all he has to obtain. When every aspect of our lives revolves around Jesus, we just don't want anything in our lives that distracts us from His Divine Presence. We don't avoid immorality just because the Church says that this or that are bad. We avoid immorality because we refuse to allow immorality to cloud the presence of the Lord within us, or even, to steal Jesus from us.

Holding on to Jesus keeps us busy. We are always fighting against our imperfections. We are always fighting against temptations. We are continually fighting against those who mock us for our dedication to Catholicism. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by the negativity around us. That is particularly when we have to put up a fight for the Lord. That is particularly when we have to be busy.

Those of you who are blessed with children, including those of you who would like to share these blessings with anyone who will take them off your hands this week, know that you cannot allow your children to flounder. Children take a tremendous amount of work to grow into decent Christian men and women. Children need a tremendous amount of love to help them manifest their Christian identity. When you do this work, when you provide this love, children experience Jesus in their homes. Be busy doing the important things in your home. Pray together as a family. Many of our families pray the rosary every evening. Others read a chapter from the New Testament and talk to God about it. I am sure that all of our families say Grace before dinner and help the little children with their bedtime prayers. Folks, there is nothing in the world that you will do that is greater than opening your children to their spiritual potential. But, as you know, that takes continual, hard work. That keeps you busy.

Standing up for the Lord keeps us busy. Those of you who are not married know how difficult it is to live as a decent Christian single. It is sad that for many Americans unwed implies immoral. There are some who feel that if a guy or a girl is a bachelor, then somehow he or she has the right to be, to put it bluntly, a lecherous drunk. This is not the way of the Catholic who treasures the Divine Presence within him or her. But the single person has to make an effort to fill his or her life with actions that

reflect Christianity. He or she has to be busy, filling life with meaningful, Christian experiences. The Church depends on our committed singles to be generous with their time.

Those of you who are married will often say that it takes work for a marriage to be successful. This work is the work of the Lord when it involves His Love, Sacrificial Love. It is not easy to express love as the Lord created Love, an act of giving, when you live in a culture that says love is a way of taking satisfaction from someone else. The sex culture has degraded marriage to measuring its success in proportion to the satisfaction generated by a blue pill. Married Christians can withstand this exploitation of their sacrament by seeking ever new ways to give themselves to their spouses in loving, selfless care and concern. It takes work, you have to be busy, to make a marriage a Christian marriage.

Many of you are married, but you do not have children, or your children have left the nest. (Yes, you are allowed to say “Alleluia, Alleluia.”) They never really leave, you know. They still look to Mom and Dad for their stability before the Lord. Along with your children, and, perhaps, their children, you are obligated to make the love of Christ real in other people. You have to reach out to those in your office, your neighborhood, your family, and let them realize that they are lovable not just to you, but to the Lord.

Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have the servants recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. And should he come in the second or third watch and find them prepared in this way, blessed are those servants.

The Lord is here. It is not enough for us to just look busy. We have to be busy. And we have to trust in Him. He will respond to our determination to live our faith by caring for us.

Fr. Joseph Pellegrino