

Faith's Journey: An Encounter and a Response

This weekend will be a memorable one for a number of our parishioners.

At our 5, 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Masses we'll be celebrating First Communions. And 10 a.m. on Saturday at the Basilica, we had the confirmation Mass celebrated.

On the one hand these are great milestones for so many of us. There's pictures taken, parties afterwards, and appropriate celebration.

However, it's more than photos too. One of the things I remember was Archbishop Flynn saying at a confirmation Mass that "this is not just a photo op." And his point is that the moment reminds us that faith is a journey, and one that requires a response.

During the Octave of Easter, (the 8 day celebration of Easter from Easter Sunday to the Second Sunday of Easter) the reading on Easter Wednesday was the story of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus. They are dejected and Jesus journeys with them but they do not know it is him. Then in the breaking of the bread they realize it is Him, but then he vanishes and they realize it was Him. And last weekend, we were reminded that we are sent, hearing "as the Father has sent me, so I send you" in the Gospel.

What First Communion and Confirmation remind us of is that our faith is a journey. But we need to also see Jesus, and bring Him to the world.

"Deism" is a school of thought that there is a God but He's not much involved in the world. He created it like a watchmaker, but that's the extent of His involvement in the world. There are probably a number of Deists in the world, but hopefully we as Catholics understand that Jesus is always with us. Where? The Eucharist, for one. Our First Communion was the first of many moments where we'll receive Jesus at Mass. We find Him by remembering that His love is always with us through so many other ways too, such as when we pray and when we celebrate the sacraments. We will meet Him face to face one day, but until that moment, we do not journey through life alone. Bishop Cozzens, who was the celebrant at Saturday's Mass, has a favorite Confirmation homily he tells where he had let his faith become lukewarm a bit in college and then saw a crucifix in a cemetery where he realized God's love in a profound way that caused him to get more serious about his faith. God has all kinds of ways of bursting into our lives. So we need to let Him in by looking for Him and remembering we are never alone. In our reading from Monday's mass last week, there was a verse in Acts of the Apostles that said: "As they prayed, the place where they were gathered shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:31). Sometimes sports stadiums shake with excitement. But wouldn't it be a great thing if we got as excited about winning a game as we did about our faith?

We then remember too that we are sent. One of the things I try to do as a priest is to remind people of the saying that sometimes we are the only Bible people will ever read. Think for a minute about how people prepare for First Communion and Confirmation;

they are helped along that journey by their sponsors and by catechists who reveal the faith to them. By being involved in the lives of others, by talking about our faith in words and actions, and applying what our faith teaches about morals and the dignity of the human person we can do so much to evangelize.

Faith is indeed a journey - it can't stop with Confirmation. We can't get sidetracked into thinking our final destination is our career, and sometimes our world revolve around a schedule, our kids sports teams, the busyness of life, when it really needs to revolve around God.

Congrats to our newly Confirmed and those making their First Communion this week. May the Holy Spirit continue to strengthen you on your journey to sainthood!

God bless,

Fr. Paul