

AH COME OFF IT FATHER! GET REAL!

RUMBLINGS FROM THE BUNKER

Now and again I am accused of talking religious gobbledygook or pious piffle. I always take such an accusation seriously mainly because I try not to do this. I think when people take me on, in this manner, they feel I am talking in a vague waffly way. Perhaps they feel I am sliding into the realm of pie in the sky when we die or simply that I am out of touch.

Years ago as a young novice I was envious of one of my confreres because he was so holy, or at least that was how I perceived him. I confided my desire to be more like him to one of the older brothers. This old sage smiled and said to me, yes Bart is a good guy but he might be a tad too holy to be of any earthly use. This left me thinking. Gradually my envy subsided and in the intervening years I have never been accused of being too holy!

Usually it is when I am advocating a unique personal relationship with Jesus that the challenge comes. People say 'ah come on Father, that's not actually possible. It's just a vague concept. How can we have a relationship at all with someone who died so long ago, never mind a unique personal relationship with him? The lines of demarcation in the argument can get more intensive when I suggest that this relationship is not an optional extra but in fact through our baptism and confirmation and most especially through Eucharist we are called to this. I am talking about us having a vibrant, exciting meaningful relationship with Jesus. Surely this is at the heart of going to Mass, of celebrating Eucharist?

In every Mass we begin with saying sorry, expressing our desire to be at one with him, to be in communion with him, and asking for the special help, the grace, to develop this relationship. After all having we shown up to be fed in Word and Sacrament. Glimpsing him freshly in the Word, and with renewed excitement doing as he asked us to do, breaking the bread. We leave with Christ within us, transforming us to be more like him, and consequently we are called to be the living salt to the earth and light to the world. What a pity, a real tragedy if this is all left on the altar. A box ticked. Duty done. Mass got as opposed to lived!

Surely the real beauty of all this is in the fact that it is fundamentally about relationship. Is it not the most exciting thing that we are invited to be in daily practical relationship with Jesus. This is the great adventure. To have the daily encounter with Jesus. His comfort, his encouragement, his guidance, his challenge. The difference he makes to everything. The difference he makes to how we spend our time, how we interact with people, how we view everything.

Now to the key point today. How can this be? How can we have this relationship with Jesus? This is so simple, we miss it. We must give it time and effort. On a daily basis the little connections, I am sorry, I love you, thank you, help me. A few times a week a more substantial period. Start with ten minutes building to a half hour and eventually an hour. Place yourself in a gospel scene and imagine yourself with Jesus. Imagine him saying your name, smiling at you, holding your hand.

Most importantly develop silence in your life. Sacred silence. We are a noisy lot and getting worse. He speaks most profoundly in the silence. We are missing multiple calls from him everyday. We are otherwise engaged. He's trying to get through. He wants to talk to us. He wants to be in relationship with us. Get real? There is no other reality as important. When we work on our relationship with Jesus we are definitely getting real!

Fraternally, JoeMcD 18.01.26