

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time
August 25, 2019
Part Two

“and Jeremiah sank into the mud.” (Jeremiah 38:6)

For these past few weeks, Catholic commentators have offered various observations and suggestions concerning the state of the Church at this time. Not only in our United States are we seeing a decline, also in Europe small churches and large cathedrals are transitioning from houses of prayer to dusty relics of a dying religious system. Last weekend, we read how an unlikely source, a Cushite court official, was inspired to be the one who would rescue Jeremiah. I firmly believe we too, having power in God’s name and strength in His Holy Spirit, can become the most unlikely of sources for rescuing our Church from this stagnation she finds herself mired in.

As Jeremiah was slowly lowered down into the mud with a rope, so too he was slowly raised up using a rope. We must begin this process remembering what a rope is. A rope consists of various items (vines, yarns, fibers, strands, etc.) all braided together to provide strength. The strength of the rope lies in how well it is braided together. God, in His generosity, has provided the strands to braid a rope which could be used to raise the Church again. In our reflection this weekend, we will examine various strands God has provided. These strands **MUST** be braided together to see the Church elevated.

The first strand God has provided is Us. In the movie Casablanca, Humphrey Bogart’s character Rick said: “Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine.” We could say: “Of all the Catholics, in all the countries of the world, during the entire history of the Catholic Church, We are the ones who must confront these issues of disbelief and poor attendance.” Some may prefer God choose a different time and generation of priests and laity to tackle these issues, rather He chose Us. We are the perfect choice to address these problems. Let me repeat that - You and I are God’s perfect choice. Not a past generation, nor a future generation, **OUR** generation. We must begin our Church’s renewal by accepting this fact - God chose Us. Once I accept that I am His choice, His first strand, then I can begin to see other strands which can be bound to myself and to others to form a strong rope.

A second strand in God’s braid is Prayer. Here I am not referring solely to personal prayer. We need to pray together as a community of believers, as a parish family. This prayer is best experienced here, at this moment, as we join together to celebrate a family meal - The Eucharist. However, as the survey results showed, this is a point of weakness, a failure, for us. Some may question my use of the word failure. If you drop over 50% in a given thing, then would you not consider that drop a failure? We have failed, post Vatican II Council, to reverently worship together as a family, as the compiled data indicated. Some propose we return to a “pre-Vatican II” Latin liturgy as a solution to this problem. Is this the magic wand to solve the problem? Honestly, only time will tell. I offer another point for us to consider. Why would someone who was born after liturgical changes of Vatican II want to regularly attend the Eucharist celebrated using the Extraordinary Form (pre-Vatican II) liturgy? As someone once said, “I may not understand the words, but I value the reverence.” Reverence is the key word. Have we slowly moved away from a reverent celebration of the Eucharist? Have we slowly devalued the Eucharist through a lack of reverence with both our demeanor toward and acceptance of mediocre church architecture (church interiors) and liturgical worship (music, homilies, devotions, etc.)? As your parish priest, my answer is - Yes. Next weekend, I will propose small ways we can implement to see if they will help us in re-establishing a greater appreciation, love, and devotion of the Eucharist and our Catholic faith.