

Year A 5th Sunday Homily Outline

“Partners in the Gospel”

What is driving the need for this reorganization?

1. The decline in religious practice
2. The lack of priests who can be pastors
 - In the Archdiocese of Seattle we have only about 65 priests who are capable of being pastor.
3. The basic structure of the Archdiocese, with all of these parishes, to a degree in every town has not changed over the last 75 years during the same time that the number of priests-capable-of-being-pastors and practicing Catholics has been sharply declining.
4. The “Partners” initiative is to look throughout the whole Archdiocese and in a comprehensive proactive way figure out how to group parishes together into the number of “families” that we are relatively certain the Church will be able to provide competent pastors for.
5. Then, as time goes on, those “families” will decide what is the best structure for them to sustain and hopefully to thrive. These will be local decisions and not Archdiocesan mandates.

Right now there is a “Partners Oversight Committee” and the “Priest Council” are working on looking at maps and parish data to determine the best configuration for the new “families”. The suggested groupings will be made public in the fall – and then go into effect July 2024.

Introduction

Structural changes - but obviously something more serious needs to change if we are to change the trajectory of the whole church rather than find ourselves doing this again, contracting again in 25 years.

A. Honest Evaluation of the past

The first step, in my mind would be to make some honest assessment of what went wrong in the past to make sure you don't keep doing the same thing. Two things seem most evident to me:

1. failure on the part of bishops and priests and by extension Catholic universities, schools and other institutions
 - a. desire to be liked and respected by the world, striving for worldly prestige
 - b. compromised by personal moral failings
 - c. failure to confidently and courageously preach the hard truths of the Gospel
 - d. failure to call people to live according to the high standards of the Gospel
 - e. failure to teach clearly and with a united voice, the hard truths about difficult moral issues: contraception, abortion, divorce, euthanasia, sexuality etc.
 - f. allowing the liturgical practices and life of the church to devolve into folksy sing-alongs that have eroded reverence and respect for, and belief in the Holy Eucharist.

This then cascades into failure on the part of laypeople

2. the failure on the part of laypeople to effectively hand on the faith within the context of their own families
 - a. live like everyone else

- b. failure for Catholics to form their consciences according to the teachings of the Church
- c. failure to make families a bulwark against the onslaught of cultural and moral decay
- d. basically, by not making Jesus the center of the family and building a domestic church.

Worsened by Cultural Decay

“We are dealing with the first culture in history that was once deeply Christian but that by a slow and thorough process has been consciously ridding itself of its Christian basis. Our society is full of many - including those baptized and raised with some exposure to faith - who believe that they have seen enough of Christianity to see that it has little to offer them.” *From Christendom to Apostolic Mission: Pastoral Strategies for an Apostolic Age*. University of Mary

B. Gospel Calls us back to what we are supposed to be!

Salt

Mt 5:13

YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH. BUT IF SALT LOSES ITS TASTE, WITH WHAT CAN IT BE SEASONED? IT IS NO LONGER GOOD FOR ANYTHING BUT TO BE THROWN OUT AND TRAMPLED UNDERFOOT.

- Preserves
- Stings in wounds

“If the church simply aims to avoid conflict, merely to ensure that no disturbances arise anywhere, then her real message can no longer make any impact. For this message is in fact there precisely in order to conflict with our behavior, to tear man out of his life of lies and to bring clarity and truth. Truth does not come cheap. It makes demands, and it also burns.” - Pope Benedict XVI

Light

- Shine the light on the Truth who is Jesus and His teaching

Conclusion

What should we do to fix it?

Our number one priority is to recover our confidence in the Truth of the Faith.

- Knowledge and love of Jesus – to build our lives so they are centered on Him
- Serious prayer
- Penance
- Worship and Reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist
- Study of the Truths of the Faith
- Spiritual Reading
- Building a resilient and welcoming community
- Faithfully living out our vocations – in good times and in bad. “Perfection consists in doing His will, in being what He wills us to be.” – St. Therese of Lisieux