

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners:

During one of our recent Tuesday night Bible Study classes a question came up that more and more Catholics are having to deal with. The question is “how do we explain to family members who no longer practice the faith or have joined other churches why they should be practicing Catholics?” Our ancestors made great sacrifices to practice and pass on their Catholic faith. To give one example from our local history—during the 1700s it was against the law for Catholics in Maryland to have their own schools. In response many Catholic families sent their sons and daughters to Belgium and France so they could attend Catholic schools. These children had to travel for weeks across the ocean on sailing ships that could very easily be lost at sea. In addition, because travel was so expensive, slow and precarious, parents sending their children off to school in Europe knew that it would be several years before they would see their children again. By that time their sons and daughters were returning as adults. Indeed, some of these parents never saw their children again. This happened to the family of John Carroll, the first American bishop. John Carroll left his home in Upper Marlboro to go to school in France at the age of 13. He didn't return until he was in his thirties. By that time his father had already passed away. I just marvel at such stories of faith and conviction.

Many Catholics today also make great sacrifices to pass on the Faith. However, sometimes their efforts seem to go for naught. Recently a woman was telling me about her sixty-something son who has divorced his wife and bought a condo in Florida with another woman. They have no plans to get married even civilly let alone in church. The man's mother is baffled. He had been sent to Catholic schools all the way through college. She is also concerned about her son's salvation as she should be. When I hear stories like this, and unfortunately I hear them all the time, I wonder what the people involved are thinking about. Who do they think the Lord was talking to when He commanded “You shall not commit adultery”? I mean it's one thing to commit a mortal sin through momentary weakness. But to enter into such a relationship with premeditation and apparently no purpose of amendment, takes a lot of nerve. “Sixty-somethings” die suddenly all the time. I can only conclude that people who make such choices no longer believe in the God of the Bible or they think that this God is not serious about the things He says. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is an invitation to a covenant relationship with the Lord. It brings the promise of a happy life both here and in the hereafter. But it also requires a response from each of us which includes recognizing the absolute truth of what the Lord says about what it means to live a good life.

The major cause of this way of thinking and acting is “relativism.” Modern western culture, forgetting its Christian roots, proclaims that God can't be known, all religions are the same and that there are no absolute truths. To these claims any serious Christian must respond with a polite but firm “bull.” We also need to be able to explain what we believe and why. To assist interested parishioners with this effort beginning on June 8th & 9th, I will begin a six week class called *What We Believe and Why*. We will go through a summary of the Church's teachings and consider how we can explain them to doubters and skeptics. We will also consider how to respond to Protestant criticism of our Catholic beliefs. The classes will meet on Tuesday evenings from 7 to 8:30 and Thursday mornings from 9:30 to 11. The cost for materials will be \$10. You can register for the classes by emailing me at rtconley@comcast.net, calling the rectory or by signing up in the church foyer beginning next weekend.

With my prayers,

Fr. Conley