

Last Sunday we had a nice parish gathering in the new parking lot after the blessing and ribbon cutting. A special thanks to the Holy Name Society for sponsoring the hot dog vendor, chips, and drinks. It was a lovely evening and with the landscaping complete, the lot is a warm space. Watching the kids playing football and wiffle ball with each other and the Totus Tuus missionaries and parishioners mingling really warms the heart. Another special thanks to Kathleen Driscoll and Ashley Guinn who coordinated both Fr. Chris's farewell lunch and the Totus Tuus week. They were both well received.

Another momentous event has occurred recently. The Supreme Court has struck down the unjust decision of Roe vs. Wade. The prayers of so many have been answered. Cardinal Cupich has a very good statement on this decision, which is included in the bulletin, reminding us to keep praying for and standing for the dignity and sanctity of every human being from conception through natural death. The fight to end abortion is not over, especially in states like ours, but this decision is such a victory for humanity.

"The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest." This instruction from the Lord is often associated with the priesthood or religious life but it's true of every vocation.

I would like to look today at what has always been considered the highest calling that God gives and that is the vocation to the contemplative life lived as a cloistered nun or monk. More than anyone else they are meant to give the Lord their hearts through prayer and ask the Master of the Harvest for His grace and blessings. St. Theresa of Avila, St. Elizabeth of the Trinity, and St. Benedict are great examples of this cloistered life of prayer and work.

I used to offer Mass down south at the Poor Clare's monastery and I happened to be there the day that the family of one of the postulants was visiting. The father shared the story of the day his daughter entered the cloister. He said that the sisters were singing songs to welcome his daughter and then went with her to the chapel for morning prayer, as they continued singing. But the door shut behind the sisters and from then on, the family would only see her once a year on their visits. He said he could hear his daughter crying tears of joy as the sisters escorted her in, the families' tears were both happy and sad.

They were happy because she was so happy, but sad because they would miss her too. It's important for parents and all of us to think about and encourage all vocations because following God's call is the thing that will make us most joyful in this life and will be the best way of making us holy.

If you've ever had the chance to go to a one of the various cloisters or monasteries many of which allow you to pray the Liturgy of the Hours with them you saw it was very beautiful and peaceful. We can take a retreat at such places to experience for a time what the nuns and monks live every day. They have found Christ the silent loving heart of the Church, a pearl of great price.

We sometimes treat our prayer like it's work, something to be done and gotten through. St. John Vianney once said that we should speak to God like this: *"I will only say a couple of things to you, and then I will be rid of you. I often think that when we come to adore the Lord, we would receive everything we ask for if we ask with living faith and a pure heart."* This is what contemplative life strives for, a living faith and pure heart with Christ.

Our world needs the prayers and example of these holy, contemplative souls. They show us how to slow down, how to pray always and they remind us that even though we must live in this busy world we are not ultimately of this world. This vocation is a gift that Jesus calls men and women to even today. Perhaps St. Theresa of Avila summed up best the effect trying to live a more contemplative life:

***"The closer one approaches to God,
the simpler one becomes."***

God bless,
Fr. Mike

