

12th Sunday OT
20 June 2021

Mark 4:35-41

The earliest symbol for Christ is the Fish, since the Greek word represent the first word in the phrase: Jesus Christ Son of God Savior.

The earliest symbol for the Church is the Boat, as in today's Gospel of Mark. The boat was tossed around by the storm, filling with water, but Jesus is asleep in the stern on a cushion.

What a great image of the Church being tossed around by the world, seeming at times to be sinking, but Christ is still present – asleep?

The Church, technically, is made present in a particular place by a local community of believers who are gathered around its Bishop. We are not simply part of a Church; we are THE Church.

Vatican II taught that, "...individual bishops...are the visible principle and foundation of unity in their particular churches, LG23, a truth proclaimed as far back by St. Ignatius of Antioch in the First Century.

Rare, though, do Catholics have a sense of connection to their cathedral and rarely if ever see their bishop. When they think of Church it is usually their parish and the Pope and St. Peter's Basilica.

I thought it would be a good time to talk about Beacons of Light since today's Gospel kind of steer us in that direction.

Our Archdiocese of Cincinnati is like that boat, or more like an armada of boats, that is in the crisis of a priest shortage. We are like ships without captains.

Beacons of Light hopes to address our priest shortage through the careful collection of data and planning for the future. This study was done before under Archbishop Polarchick but was then shelved. Archbishop Schnurr is committed along with his priest council to move forward in this endeavor to address our priest shortage.

At our last presbyteral assembly, all the priest, religious priests, and deacons and even the retired priests were invited to attend, since it would eventually concern us all. At that assembly, the data was presented and is available at the Beacon of Light.com web site. This is all out in the open and accessible.

I believe we are blessed to have such an Archbishop with his council of priests and the help of a professional Catholic Foundation to assist diocese in facing such crises as our priest shortage. Shelve this initiative again would be disastrous and leave our archdiocese in this position unprepared is irresponsible.

What the Data present you will have to visit the site yourself, since it is quite comprehensive, especially to call a full presbyteral assembly to assess the data. Some of the data collected, which I sent in at the beginning of the year includes:

- 1- Condition of the buildings and the state they are presently in, including future repair work,
- 2- Financial status and stability of the parish, outstanding debts, or assets,
- 3- Attendance at the Sacraments, Number of Families, Participation,
- 4- Volunteers at all levels from cleaning to sacramental ministers, from servers to readers, etc.
- 5- Accommodation at each Mass and how well the space is utilized,
- 6- Schools, and other active programs.

Saint Francis de Sales is doing well, we are financially sound, attendance is holding (pre-Covid), our school is doing great in its service to the students but struggling financially because of the Covid, the buildings are in good repair, but constant upkeep is needed, volunteer help at all levels but falling off (due to the covid?).

What will our future hold? I don't know. I'm the new guy on the block. Need to wait and see, but it looks good to me.

At the end of July, the initial grouping of parishes into Families will begin, but it is not the end. It will be open for input and discussion and revision. That is when the dialogue will begin. This will be at least a two-year process, not over night!