

Companions on the Journey

August 21, 2022

Dear Friends,

Sometimes we get a certain feeling about things. I am not certain always how accurate or authentic these feelings are. Still, there is a growing sense that the exodus from the Catholic church is slowing and that there are signs that people are beginning to miss something. Something that they had when they were practicing their faith on a regular basis. Perhaps it is just at the anecdotal level for now but I hear people saying things like: “This funeral has me thinking that maybe I am going to come back to the church.” Or, ‘Father, that homily you gave really made me think and I have been missing something and I believe it is time I start to practice my faith again. I want to come back to Mass.’”

It is not a flood of people. It is a trickle. But you know, even substantial movements of water begin with a little trickle. Saint Bernadette of Lourdes was asked by the Blessed Mother to dig until she found some water. Bernadette thought Our Lady meant the River Gave. No. Not by the river. “Dig here, Bernadette. Bernadette did dig and finally she got to a little spring right below the surface of the ground. And that spring led to a bigger spring. And that spring is the spring in which people bathe and find healing. Still to this day. It started small but grew and grew. What is happening in the Church is starting small but is going to grow and grow.

I was speaking with some priests recently about our Archbishop, Nelson Perez. We were talking about the fact that there are fewer priests and that this Archbishop, like his [predecessors, will have to start closing and consolidating parishes again. But in my conversation with the Archbishop he has given no indication that he will close parishes. He would rather work and finding ways to encourage Catholics who have stopped the practice of their faith to begin to return to the practice of their faith. He encourages his priests and the staffs of parishes to follow his leadership in this pursuit.

My thought is: Why not? We have closed a lot of parishes and a lot of schools. That avenue will be there for us whenever. But if people returned and began to fill our parishes again, then would not that change the picture and alter the dynamic. In my praying what the Lord has said to me is that the time of pruning the Church and the cutting away the deadwood is over. Now is to be the time of blossoming again. It is a very hopeful word. Even our project of the Chapel of Perpetual Adoration is from the Lord. This year and the next two are years for each parish to focus on the Eucharist and elevate the prayer in each parish by focusing on time spent in prayer before the Blessed sacrament. Why not try this? We have commiserated for a long time about the decline. Let’s start putting our faith I the Holy Spirit to reinvigorate the faith of Catholics everywhere. We will be praying for the return of our children to the practice of their faith. I have been asking Our Lord to help me compose such a prayer. We are working on it together. It will be ready soon. Pray for me to find just the right words, said in just the right way.

In the peace of Christ,

Msgr. McHenry