

Easter 2018
04/01/18

There is a story told of an old couple who argued a lot, deciding to travel before they died. One place they had always wanted to see was Israel. Sadly, while they were there, the wife died. When the husband tried to see what arrangements he could make for her funeral, the mortician told him she could be buried in Israel for \$2,000 or they could send her body back to the U.S., but it would cost \$20,000 to transport her.

He thought for a moment and said we'll send her to the United States. A friend asked why he would spend so much money to send her back home. He said, "one time a person rose from the dead here in Israel and I can't take the chance it will happen again."

Yes, that's certainly a funny story but let me assure you that, despite the fact that it is April Fool's Day, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was no joke. Yes, the idea that Easter Sunday falls on April 1st is sort of funny, especially if you ask other priests or ministers who may be preaching today. But Christ certainly rose from the dead and that's why we've come together this morning. And allow me to state another somewhat obvious fact. We have a lot of visitors with us today, folks who come to church only on special occasions. And so the rest of my comments are more or less directed to you, but not to the exclusion of the rest.

Back in February we held a parish mission, with Jon Leonetti as the leader, and I have to say that it was a great success. He led us on a 3 day journey, with close to 200 people attending each night. I got to know Jon better than others, if only because he stayed with me while in town. I bring up his name because he has written three books, one of which is entitled *Your God Is Too Boring*.

Near the end of the book, he reminds us that God is anything but boring and that the life God has for us isn't boring either. He then talks about how he closes his missions with a commission, one that is not necessarily comfortable. He then asks us to dream with him. And here is some of his dream.

What would our Church, our parish, look like if everyone was so proud to be a part of it that they would beg as many of their friends and family as they possibly could to give it a try, even for just one week?

Imagine if every time we heard a baby cry our first instinct was to give thanks to God for the gift of the baby, and not wonder why the parents haven't taken him or her out of the church.

Imagine every parish around the world full fifteen minutes before Mass, with parishioners prayerfully preparing for the true presence of Jesus to enter into their souls. Imagine if this and every parish around the world were known as the premier place in their city for social outreach, feeding the poor, helping those in crisis and assisting immigrants.

Imagine every Catholic parish having enough volunteers to take communion to all of the homebound and elderly. What if instead of a handshake and a smile for me and Deacon John, people asked us what specific needs the parish had? What would happen if every parish around the world were really beginning to make its parishioners into saints? What would we begin to look like? And how would that change marriages and families?

Leonetti says that he is not disappointed in Catholics around the world and I agree – neither am I. He says that every time he gathers with the people of God he sees the potential within each and every person and I likewise see so much potential. And why? Because God is with us and longs to do great things with us.

Those of you who are visiting may be wondering why I said I was speaking more to you than the regular members. It's because there is so much work to be done here at St. Pat's and if we had these kinds of crowds each and every week, we could accomplish so much. We'd have the time and talent we need to do great things.

And so, my final questions are addressed to everyone. What brings you to church today, this April Fool's Easter? Is it curiosity? Is it the lilies, the music? The last dream Leonetti and I have is this: what would St. Pat's look like if every man, woman and child, every family, every couple, every single that are registered here at St. Pat's were made to feel just a little more alive each day, each week, each year? He suggests it would change the world. A lot of us are here every week. How about you? Will you help us fulfill our dream?