

Mar. 31, 2019

Thoughts from the pastor,

This weekend we will be having 1st Communions at some of the Masses. The second graders have been preparing for over a year for this day. They will be all dressed up and nervous. Part of their nerves comes from this being something new and they worry that they will make a mistake. Another part of the nerves comes to them because this sacrament is associated with their 1st Reconciliation which most of them made just two months ago. That was very nerve-racking. Hopefully that part of their nervousness will never go away totally. I don't know any adults who aren't nervous before they come to the priest for this encounter with God. Even priests get nervous as we go to confession. There is a lot to remember and guilt and failure are not our favorite emotions. The third part of the nervousness is that they are dressed up. That doesn't happen much anymore so they know something extra ordinary is going on.

When they were 1st graders I had a class with them and their parents to initiate the instructions on these sacraments. I mentioned to them that when they received Jesus in Communion, he would be inside them and they might actually feel him try to give them a hug from the inside out. At that time none of us could figure out how that might feel. It was shortly after that when I had that experience. It was when I was at Mundelein Seminary for my class on Spiritual Direction. I was starting one of my walks around the lake at the seminary when I had a very bizarre feeling. I felt a warmth that started inside my abdomen and moved out and around my body. It took me a while to figure it out. I felt that it was a sign from the Lord but I couldn't identify it until the thought of what I had said to the 1st graders and their parents came back to me. Then I realized that the Lord had used my words to greet me and get me thinking. It was shortly after that when he pushed me into writing my book. I hope that Jesus will reveal himself to more of the children with similar experiences. In our current culture I believe that it is getting harder for young people to feel that bond with the Lord and hold onto it.

Less than a month later, our 8th graders will be receiving Confirmation. That happens on Thursday, April 25th, with Archbishop Curtiss' coming. The power of the Holy Spirit is another thing that is hard for people to hold onto. Our 8th graders are offered these gifts from the Holy Spirit to help them in their spiritual journey. We live in a spiritual battle zone. The devil does not want us to get to heaven and it throwing all sorts of temptations at us to make us fall. The gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, right judgment, courage, reverence, and fear of the Lord and some of the weapons we can use in that battle. They can help us to defeat temptation. The trouble is that we have to prepare for their reception and use. Weapons are useless if you don't know how to use them. The more we practice with them the better we get at using them in combat. Even the little penances that we do during Lent can help us in that training so that we are more battle ready. Pray for our 2nd and 8th graders, and also for each other as we move forward in this journey through the combat zone of this life.

Next weekend we will have Rachel Kauffold here to give us some information on FOCUS ministries. This is the Fellowship of Catholic University Students that was started by Curtis Martin. These FOCUS missionaries are on college campuses to help the students to fight the battle against temptation at this important stage in their lives. More important it helps them build on their relationship with the Lord.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank