

Embracing our Deeper Mission

By Christina Semmens

During the last several weeks, articles have been appearing here in the One Voice about the upcoming Diocesan Eucharistic Congress to be held at the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center (BJCC) on June 28-29, 2019.

I am excited about this upcoming event—particularly because it can serve as both a “wake-up call” as well as an opportunity for all in the Diocese of Birmingham. But why do we need a “wake up call”? Because the routine of daily life can become all-consuming, and even overwhelming as we tend to our work and personal responsibilities. Because the 24/7 siren call of the world’s allurements—good and bad—are continuous distractions to God’s ever-present invitation to embrace our deeper mission.

But what exactly is that “deeper mission”? It is that God is inviting every one of us—all of His beloved sons and daughters—to share in the abundance of His divine life by following Jesus in the way of holiness. Simply, it is that God is inviting us to become saints--or in the words of Pope Francis, to become “Missionary Disciples”.

When I share this idea with people, many people respond that they aren’t good enough, or have what it takes to become a saint. That it’s not possible for them. Since I tend to be a mischievous person, I often agree and say they are absolutely right. But then I add, “It isn’t possible for US. It IS possible for God.” Once we laugh a bit about not letting God be God, and that He truly is calling us to holiness, other questions will then emerge, like “How do I go about discovering my deeper mission?” or “How do I live out my mission in my daily life?”

“A Theology of the Head, Heart, Hands and Feet” is a phrase I came across many years ago during my theology studies. Over the years, I have taken the original intent (in which the author used it to describe the process of how people come to faith and belief) and modified it to explain how our spiritual life needs to encompass all of who we are—the head (our continual growth in knowledge of God and His Church), the heart (our life of prayer and meditation), the hands (our service of others through the works of mercy) and the feet (where we “go out into the desert” to spend time with God on retreat). Our spiritual life should be attentive to ensuring that all of these aspects are present as we are living out our life of faith.

Once I share this idea, I then ask them to reflect upon which way (Head, Heart, Hands or Feet) that they have most easily encountered God in their life, and also where it has seemed easiest to hear Him speaking. Once we identify this, we then have a foundation upon which to build into our life the other practices that are necessary for us to share in the divine life and follow Jesus on the path of holiness, and also the opportunity for us to find true happiness by accepting God's invitation to embrace our deeper mission in life.

One article is not sufficient for laying out how to embrace our deeper mission in life, so in the months ahead, you are going to see numerous articles, videos, and other resources shared here in the One Voice and also at www.BHMCatholic.com to help you with that endeavor. The focus of all this will be on becoming "Missionary Disciples" and how to share in the abundance of the divine life, while discussing the reality that it is "through the Eucharist" that this will all come together in our lives. I invite you to embark upon this journey and the challenge of preparing for the Eucharistic Congress, because the more we prepare, the more we are able to receive the blessings and graces that God has in store for us.

In the Gospel of Matthew 25:1-13, Jesus tells the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins who are awaiting the arrival of the Bridegroom, and how the five virgins who are prepared for the bridegroom's arrival are rewarded, and how the five who failed to prepare well are disowned. Since we never know when the Bridegroom will be arriving, Jesus tells us we should follow the model of the wise virgins and set aside "oil for our lamps." Similarly, I hope that by actively preparing for the Eucharistic Congress, we may each discover that we are not only ready to welcome the Bridegroom when He comes, but that we also find that our lamps are burning so brightly with God's grace, that we are able to embody what St Catherine of Siena once said, "Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire." I will be praying that you decide to accept God's invitation to become whom He created you to be by embracing your deeper mission, and preparing to set the world on fire by becoming saints!