

The Pictures Don't Do It Justice...

Having a personal experience usually trumps anything that can be read on paper. Now granted, book knowledge has its merits. But something can be said for that real life experience.

The same can be said for exploring your faith and deepening your relationship with God. I understand that some get intimidated when they hear 'deepening your relationship with God'. But it can be very simple. It is taking that leap to decide instead of just hearing about the nice weather outside, to open the door, step out and look at the blue sky and feel the sun on your face. Its giving yourself a chance to feel the cool rain on your skin instead of watching it run down the outside of the window.

I was thinking on some other ways to illustrate this thought. I was given the gift to explore my faith when Father decided that I could bring the information on the World Meeting of Families to my church family. At the time the gift may have seemed a bit daunting, but the Lord works in mysterious ways.

So how do I show the benefit and blessing of growing in knowledge of the Catholic Faith? How can I help others understand?

Then the thought came to my mind- pictures just don't do it justice.

Have you ever had someone show you pictures from their vacation only to hear them say "the pictures don't do it justice" or "you had to be there" The water is so much bluer, that mountain was just so big, the stars at night were amazing!

I can relate to those sentiments.

My family and I went on a trip out to California to visit the Sequoia National Park and Kings Canyon.

I took over 1000 pictures while exploring this unique piece of God's creation.

I love looking at those pictures and every time I see one I get this feeling inside that I can't explain. On the flip side, it is kind of frustrating when I show those images to others that hadn't been there because the pictures don't do it justice.

That is what giving yourself a chance to learn more about your faith can do.

It turns just looking at a post card to having the real thing locked into your heart and mind. The clearest picture can only go so far. Having a personal experience of what you are looking at takes those images off the page and lets them soar to a whole other level.

I believe that is what our Church is doing now. They are wanting others to understand that there is this whole other level to their faith.

This World Meeting of Families is their proclamation to the world that Faith and Family matter. The importance of these two things is so great that they want the world to know it despite modern day criticism. Our Church believes to its core that to preserve the family you will in turn preserve the world.

Our Faith is a light in a dark world. We face a culture that tries to take away the true value of marriage and family. This culture which creates this endless appetite for new experiences.

The catechism writes about this, it reads; “Corporate marketing creates this endless appetite, creates a climate of perpetually roaming and unsatisfied desire.”

It goes on to proclaim; ‘Life in a perpetual marketplace may tempt us to think that if we desire something, if it is consensual and we can afford it financially, then we are entitled to it. That sense of entitlement is a destructive illusion, a type of slavery to the appetites, diminishing our freedom for living virtuously. Our failure to embrace limits, our stubborn insistence on our appetites, fuels many spiritual and material problems in our world today.’

If we embrace our core beliefs we can change this course. We must hold strong and always remember that we are created in the image of God, our destiny is always communion, sacrifice, service and love.

Our church family is and should remain a home for the wounded heart. Pope Francis once famously likened the Church to a “field hospital after battle”. He said: “It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds...And you have to start from the ground up”

Our church believes that at this ground level is our families- wisely they understand that to build a better world we need to start with our families. Our husbands and wives, our mothers and fathers, our sons and daughters.

Our Catechism proclaims: “Life in the Body of Christ is meant to be lived as interdependent members, who build one another up in love. The Church’s teaching, sacraments, and community all exist to help us on this journey. With patience, forgiveness, and trust, in the Body of Christ, together we can heal and live in ways that might seem impossible.”

Have you ever heard the saying “The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.”? Our Catholic faith gets that in spades. Our families are so important to this world, our very existence even, that our beliefs are zeroed in on preserving and sanctifying our families.

So I would encourage you to embrace your greatness. Saint John Paul II proclaimed: “Families, become what you are...” his words have a sense of urgency that only grows in the face of the sometimes immense challenges that families experience today.

John Paul goes on to witness; “And since in God’s plan it has been established as an ‘intimate community of life and love,’ the family has the mission to become more and more what it is, this is to say, a community of life and love in an effort that will find fulfillment in the kingdom of God” When the family embraces these truths, the family becomes what it was always meant to become.

The Catechism for the World Meeting of Families talks about our mission and I loved what it says:

“This mission is not reserved for the few or for the extraordinary. Nor does it mean that families somehow have to stop being themselves or seek after some impossible perfection in order to witness to the Gospel. The Christian family is called to deepen, reflect upon, and witness to the love and life that are already basic to being family.”

I want to thank you for letting me share with you what I have learned. What I have shared with you is just a small portion to what is available out there. I want to encourage all here to seek a deeper understanding of their faith.

As I have shared before~ the World Meeting of Families will be held this month in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I have been blessed with the opportunity to attend this event. I thank you, my church family, for your encouragement prayers and support.

I would like to conclude by leading us in prayer for the World Meeting of Families:

God and Father of us all,
In Jesus, your Son and our Savior,
You have made us
Your sons and daughters
In the family of the Church.
May your grace and love
Help our families
In every part of the world
Be united to one another
In fidelity to the Gospel.
May the example of the Holy Family,
With the aid of your Holy Spirit,
Guide all families, especially those most troubled,
To be homes of communion and prayer
And to always seek your truth and live in your love.
Though Christ our Lord. Amen
Jesus, Mary and Joseph, pray for us!

BY: Shannon Holthaus