

Ascension Thursday

“Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?” So asked the angels to the Apostles in the first reading, and so asks the angels to us today, meaning what? Meaning, the message of Easter is, “Jesus is risen and so will you?” It’s more like, “Jesus is risen. There is work to do.” And is there ever work to do!

In the leadership meeting with those parishioners, taking the charge of Eucharistic Adoration, I asked that, in addition to the personal intentions of the adorers who come to adore, I would like to additional intentions for our Adoration Chapel: to pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and for the end of abortion, and specifically, that the abortion clinic in Cherry Hill closes.

Regarding vocations, here is an alarming statistic. We have 107 parishes in the diocese, 166 priests, and 51 of those priests will retire in the next five years. So while I have been privy to this information for some time as a member of the episcopal council, I have been very much concerned about the shortage of priests. As we have heard about the vocation crisis for some time, it’s here.

If God is asking us to be all that He is asking us to be here at St. Mary of the Lakes, and across this great Catholic Church of ours, if the Gospel is to be proclaimed to the world and to every creature as today's Gospel directs, if our youth are to be formed and educated in the truths of the faith, if all our brothers and sisters in need who come to St. Mary of the Lakes, to our sizable St. Vincent DePaul, are to have their needs met, then you and I, then all of us have to be "all in" like never before. As I just said, there is a vocation crises [plural], but not just for priesthood but for married life as well. Marriages are wayyyyy down. At St. Mary of the Lakes, there are eight weddings this year, which is twice as many as when I arrived, but still – eight weddings.

So given the vocation crises, given the work we have to do – our parish mission statement comes from today's feast when Our Ascended Lord said in Matthew's Gospel, Go out and make disciples of all the nations, and we are reminded of our mission each time we drive out of SML, as it's on the light pole banners, it is providential that we are beginning perpetual adoration at St. Mary of the Lakes.

We are blessed as a parish, and as a school. Between the two, we have over 80 ministries: about 70 in the parish and

about 10 in the school. That's a blest number! Abundantly blest! I can only imagine how that number will grow once perpetual adoration begins. The evidence is there. Parishes with perpetual adoration take off in every way! They are super abundantly blest by our Lord, perhaps because Our Ascended Lord gives us the grace to open our eyes wider to all the work there is to do!

You may be asking what will I do for an hour in adoration? If you're talking about the work we have to do? The simple answer is you don't have to "do" anything anything. Adoration is simply a need to be with Our Eucharistic Lord in order to give us the grace to do the work that needs to be done. You just need to be. We are Catholic. And we believe the Eucharist IS Jesus. The Eucharist IS God. We do not believe the Eucharist is a symbol of God, or represents God or signifies God. We believe the Eucharist IS God. So when I make a holy hour, I often take with me a book for spiritual reading (and there will be books available for you), or my Rosary, or my breviary. But it is also often, that I prefer to put these to the side and just be. Just sit with Our Blessed Lord. I look at Him and He looks at me. And I love the peace that surrounds and

enfolds me. And according to my Fitbit, my heart rate is at its lowest when I just “be” with Jesus

We need to pray before the Lord for vocations to the priesthood and vocations to marriage. We also need to pray before the Lord asking Him how He wants us to use the graces he has given us to the measure of Christ’s gift, says today’s second reading. He has given each of us gifts, and we need to use those gifts in this parish, in this Church, so to take the Gospel to the ends of the Church, or at the very least, to the ends of our parish. So if you haven’t yet, sign up for perpetual adoration in the Jackson Rd. entrance after the Mass.