

in a

Word™

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So he said to his disciples, "The harvest is large, but there are few workers to gather it in. Pray to the owner of the harvest that he will send out workers to gather in his harvest."
Matthew 9:37-38)

TALKS FROM TRIALS OF LIFE'S CAULDRON

by

Father Jerome LeDoux, SVD

We SVD brothers and priests were meeting at the St. Augustine Residence in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi a couple of years ago when Bishop Fulton J. Sheen got into the conversation. Among other things, the legendary speaker, TV and radio personality was known for his meticulous, multi-hour preparations for his sundry talks and sermons.

"Jerome, do you do it like that?" Bishop Curtis Guillory asked with a smirk on his face and an impish twinkle in his eye.

"I do more," I returned, "albeit with a different twist. At the beginning of the week, I scan the Scripture readings for the upcoming weekend to get a fix on them and a likely theme for the Sunday. Throughout the week, I walk around with those Scriptures tumbling in my head, wrapping them around whatever I read, hear, see or experience."

Far be it from me to claim that my methodology is better than Bishop Sheen's. The truth is that one size does not fit all. Each speaker does what works best for him or her. The common elements are some research, some meditative thought, some prayer, a sharp awareness of what one hears, sees, reads and experiences, and a live imagination.

Thus, the vibrant cauldron of our everyday life becomes the chief catalyst in our quest for the divine, incarnating the Word of God into the warp and woof of our being, every thought, word and action. Our joys, sorrows, trials and triumphs are fired in this cauldron. After these have percolated, I stand live, mentally naked before my audiences.

Granted, there are occasions when one might opt for reading a prepared script, such as the "I Have a Dream" speech of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Most speakers feel more secure and more confident with a written script before them. However, even at times like those, I lean toward the thorough preparation and the mentally-naked delivery.

One can feel very alone out there without a written script. Nonetheless, such a mentally-naked situation forces one to be fresh, creative, imaginative, more engaging and much more reliant on nudgings of the Holy Spirit who is eager to fill all human vacuums.

From time to time, I test the recall of church members to hear how much they remember of the things I have said. To my dismay, at times their recall of certain things is at or near zero. It is to my great advantage in piecing a sermon together that I have a healthy recall of what I have said on given topics recently or over the span

of many years.

Again, I have been blessed with a healthy recall of Holy Scripture that I quote freely and frequently by chapter and verse, challenging the congregation to check those citations in one of the Bibles that we keep handy in the pews. It is always worth a smile to see some members whip out their cell phone and go online for the Bible quotes.

Yet, one cannot afford to be lazy in reaping the fruits of such personal recall of talks and thoughts past. Rather, every good turn of phrase, each inspired expression past or present must be scrutinized, critiqued, tweaked and improved in every way possible until the incarnation of God's word is accomplished in our entire being and life.

Our quest must be "Non nova, sed noviter," "Not new things, but things presented in a fresh way," as the old Latin saying goes and as Ecclesiastes 1:9 reads, "What has been, that will be; what has been done, that will be done. Nothing is new under the sun."

Vain is the life of anyone who restlessly and doggedly seeks what is new while spurning and rejecting the tried and true, whether in the material or spiritual world. New is always a variation, an elaboration of what already is, so that very few are the pioneers and inventors before whom stand no people whose backs and shoulders they can climb.

Most importantly, after all our human preparations, we must leave room for the fiery work of the Holy Spirit. Paul expresses it well in 1 Corinthians 2:3-5, "I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of spirit and power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God."

Paul says more in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the things freely given us by God. And we speak about them not with words taught by human wisdom, but with words taught by the Spirit, describing spiritual realities in spiritual terms."

We must be constantly aware that, after the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the most powerful item we bring with us into a talk is our personal example and witness of God in whatever we think, say or do in every phase and arena of life, for "Words move; examples draw," an ancient Latin dictum says. St. Francis of Assisi ups the ante, "Always remember to preach the Gospel, and, if necessary, use words."

VOCATIONS – EVERY CATHOLIC’S PRIORITY

(Part Eight of National Black Catholic Pastoral Plan)

So he said to his disciples, “The harvest is large, but there are few workers to gather it in. Pray to the owner of the harvest that he will send out workers to gather in his harvest.” (Matthew 9:37-38)

Keeping our beloved parishes and schools open requires keeping them staffed. Every Catholic who loves the Church must pray for, believe in, and encourage vocations to the priesthood and religious life. This is not just the job of vocation directors.

Fortunately, the work of evangelization and vocations go hand in hand. Vocations grow when we nurture faith, catechism, prayer, and service in children and youth.

In the United States, the number of priests has fallen 33% in the past thirty five years, while the Catholic population has increased 34%. The result of ordinations and population moving in opposite directions is that more than 3,200 U.S. parishes no longer have a resident priest.

There is simply no substitute in the Catholic tradition for the priest who consecrates the Eucharist and reconciles the sinner to Christ through the confessional. Because every Catholic relies on priests, *every Catholic* needs to make vocations a priority.

The permanent diaconate and consecrated life as brothers, sisters, or lay associates contribute immeasurably to the universal church and the common good. Too many Catholics have misconceptions and biases about what a vocation to religious life is like. The same logic that encourages networking, internships, and mentoring for youth who are exploring a secular profession applies for youth who might consider religious life. Young people need to interact with clergy and religious, to see firsthand what they do and how they find fulfillment and challenge in their work.

Our perspective as African Americans

The ordination class of 2012 in the United States has just one U.S.-born African American.¹² Indigenous priests, that is, priests who have a common background with the people to whom they minister, are vital to the long-term work of evangelization. We need to support priests and seminarians in their vocations and find ways to become more effective at inviting and supporting African Americans to the priesthood. The National Black Catholic Congress has long called for more representation of African Americans in the leadership of the Church. Of course, Black bishops begin as Black priests. If we would like to see our community reflected in the faces of the bishops’ conference in the future, we need to develop vocations to the priesthood, today.

The National Black Catholic Congress, in collaboration with the Institute for Parish Life at the University of Notre Dame,

brought some 30 African American priests together in 2010 to reflect on their own vocations and devise strategies for supporting vocations. This effort, however, takes more time and resources than these already-time-burdened pastors have. Greater collaboration between priests, vocations directors, lay organizations, and African American schools and parishes is needed to create a more effective outreach in our community.

We strongly affirm the vital witness of African American religious in our faith community. We commit ourselves to working with African American Catholic religious sisters and brothers to foster vocations to their respective communities and to support them in their apostolic endeavors.

Our faith engaged

- Because we cherish the Celebration of the Eucharist, we take seriously our personal responsibility to pray for and promote vocations to the priesthood.
- We encourage parish organizations and individuals to support seminarians through Burse Clubs and seminary development campaigns.
- We commit ourselves to encourage and support our friends and relatives who might be called to be Sisters, Brothers, Deacons or Priests.
- We call on vocation directors in dioceses and religious communities to reach out to African American youth, particularly through predominantly black parishes and schools, national Black Catholic leadership organizations, Xavier University of Louisiana, and the Newman Centers at historically Black colleges and universities.
- We commit ourselves to promote awareness of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University of New Orleans, where professionals and volunteers can develop the knowledge and understanding to minister most effectively in the Black Catholic community.
- With deep respect and gratitude for the sisters, brothers, and priests who nurtured our faith and character, we commit to being generous in the annual collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious, typically held in December.
- We strongly urge every Black Catholic to consider a generous donation to the congregations of men and women religious who have served the African American community for generations. These include the Oblate Sisters of Providence, Sisters of the Holy Family, the Franciscan Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, the Josephite Fathers and Brothers, Holy Ghost Fathers, the Society of the Divine Word, and many other congregations who have served our community.

in a word or two



Franciscan Father James E. Goode and the Board of Consultants of the National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life announce **“June is All Acts of Violence and Abortion Awareness Month 2013”**.

For the past 15 years the National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life has invited the nation to join them as they pray, educate, motivate and move our nation, to a nation of peace and non violence, according to Msgr. Mauricio West, Vicar

General Diocese of Charlotte and member of the NBCAL Board of Consultants.

The Board of Consultants of NBCAL this year, more than ever, is outraged by the violence that surrounds our communities. Yet, as faith filled Catholics, we are resolved to live and preach the Gospel of Life. “As a people of life we are motivated by the words of Saint Francis of Assisi. “You must have peace in your hearts. Let no one be provoked to anger or scandal by you, but may they be drawn to peace and good will, to kindness and concord through your gentleness.” stated Father Jim Goode, OFM, President of the National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life.

Come and join us as we consecrate the month of June as “June is All Acts of Violence and Abortion Awareness”. In the words of Therese Wilson Favors, “Wake up family a Revolution is Warranted to end all violence...”

A Revolution is Warranted June is All Acts of Violence and Abortion Awareness Month 2013”

www.blackcatholicsforlife.org

Divine Word Missionaries were part of the large crowd affected by a horrific bomb blast two weeks ago. A bomb that exploded on May 5, 2013 in Arusha, Tanzania killing three persons and injuring at least 50 people, twelve of them seriously, amidst the gathering of nearly three thousand people, even as Archbishop Josephat Lebulu blessed the Holy water in the presence of His Excellency Archbishop Francis Padilla, the Nuncio to Tanzania and Fr. Eusebio Manangbao SVD, provincial superior. The Church authorities along with at least 40 priests and about a hundred nuns with a large crowd had gathered on the occasion of the inauguration of the newly built Church for a new parish in Olasiti, Arusha, Tanzania, run by Divine Word Missionaries.

Divine Word Fathers Peter, Albert and Michael immediately rushed the injured to the hospital who were helped by others in this emergency. Though there was a panic on the site of the scene, people and especially the children screaming and running helter-skelter, a stampede was avoided preventing the tragedy to become worse.



Both the Archbishop and the Nuncio were whisked away immediately by the security personnel inside the newly built Church which was about to be blessed and inaugurated.

The catholic laity along with Fr. Peddy SVD, the Parish priest of Burka had worked hard to build the Church and had begun the day's function with a few words of welcome to the Bishop, the Nuncio and the rest of the people gathered there. The blast took place outside the church before the inauguration. Eyewitnesses said that the bomb was thrown at the crowd.

The authorities decided to call off the whole inauguration function. Within minutes the police and the investigating personnel arrived on the scene and began their work. Senior police officials and politicians too reached the spot. The police have arrested a suspect from near the scene of the blast.



The 2013 Archbishop Lyke Conference will be held June 19-23, 2013. This liturgical conference is a Roman Catholic Conference with a focus to enhance worship through enculturation and education in an environment that is richly African American and authentically Catholic. For more information go to

www.LykeConference.com

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

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