



We live in exciting times in our church. A Synod has been called to listen and to reflect. We, each and everyone of us, have been invited to participate. It is the opening of a dialogue. For us, we are invited to do our part.

A questionnaire has been composed to invite us to reflect on the three major areas of this dialogue. I encourage you to take the time before we enter the season of Lent to become a participant.

Our website is the connection point for participation. <https://tinyurl.com/4fazx47k>

Feel free to bring these questions to your prayer life. Pray over what God is saying to you! Inform us of what the Holy Spirit is prompting you to say in response to these points of reflection. Feel free to answer all or just some of the questions. Your participation is the Church's invitation to begin the dialogue for the future.

Thank you for taking the time to give us your input. The Parish Council will then send this on to the Diocese. We are asking you to please respond by March 1st as a prelude to our season of Lent. Once again these are exciting times as the Universal Church invites us to become a voice for the future.

Fr. John

MEANT TO BE TAKEN PERSONALLY

Today we hear a familiar message in the Gospel. In the Gospel of Matthew, we hear of Jesus gathering on a mount and famously saying, "Blessed are they." Today we are in a different location on a stretch of level ground and Jesus proclaiming, "Blessed are you." That is much more personal. In the Gospel of Luke, added to this are situations that are to challenge us. We hear "Woe to you." In this contrast, we enter the paradox of the spiritual life. It is personal and we can't escape. When we are rich and filled and laughing, we are to be aware that there will be another time when the opposite is true. Life is two sides of the same coin. It can be described as a roller coaster, an ebb, and flow. Inconsistently consistent.

How are we to live our faith in this paradox? One of the spiritual gems one can experience following Jesus is that His inclusion is always to the marginalized. When we feel most left out and in need, He is ready to embrace us. Likewise, when we are living well and things seem to be going our way, we are not to be so attached that our need to have it always be this way becomes the driving force of our lives. There is this cyclical loop. Woe when you are filled, you will be hungry. Yet before that, He states blessed are you in that hunger, because you will be satisfied. This message is a reminder that the hunger or being filled is not an end in itself, we are. God pours His love into us, at all times and in all ways.

This weekend many eyes will be upon the Super Bowl. From commercials to what actually takes place on the field, much conversation and comparisons will be made. In that stadium winners and losers will be determined. On social media, in newspapers, and in follow-up programming, winners and losers will be announced based on audience reactions. Comparisons to previous Super Bowls and Super Bowl advertising will be chartered. It makes for great dialogue, yet outside of the stadium and inside the church, the message is very different. Best or worst are not the categories found in God's love. Analyzing the ratio of response to the message is not part of God's approach. He simply loves with a Divine Love. With all the hype of the Super Bowl can we see a love that allows both Rams and Bengals fans to be equal? Can we embrace a vision where the team that receives the Lombardy Trophy and the team that doesn't are equal? Can we move to a vision in which the commercials we like the best and the ones we felt were a waste of time is inconsequential?

The Gospel today invites us to take it personally. Jesus wants us to not look outside ourselves, but to our own life experiences. He wants us to have a personal experience and relationship with Him. We will see a lot of examples of winners and losers and a lot of analysis of statistics. Only one thing matters. God sent Jesus into the world so that all might be included in His final gift, life won for us all on the cross. God always wins and there are no losers. He overcomes all sin once and for all.

This is the most perfect message.



Fr. John