

For Sunday, July 23, 2017

The God Who Is Not a Program

16th Sunday Ordinary Time

<http://usccb.org/bible/readings/072317.cfm>

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

Romans 8:26-27

Matthew 13:24-43 or 13:24-30

I have been working in the Church now as an adult for twenty-five years and I have seen so many things come and go. There were so many programs that promised to completely overhaul your parish and, in turn, change the world. There have been trends brought to us by conferences and workshops, buzzwords that seemed to either bring joy or tribulation to one's heart, and book after book intending to be that last book you will ever need in ministry or in changing your life.

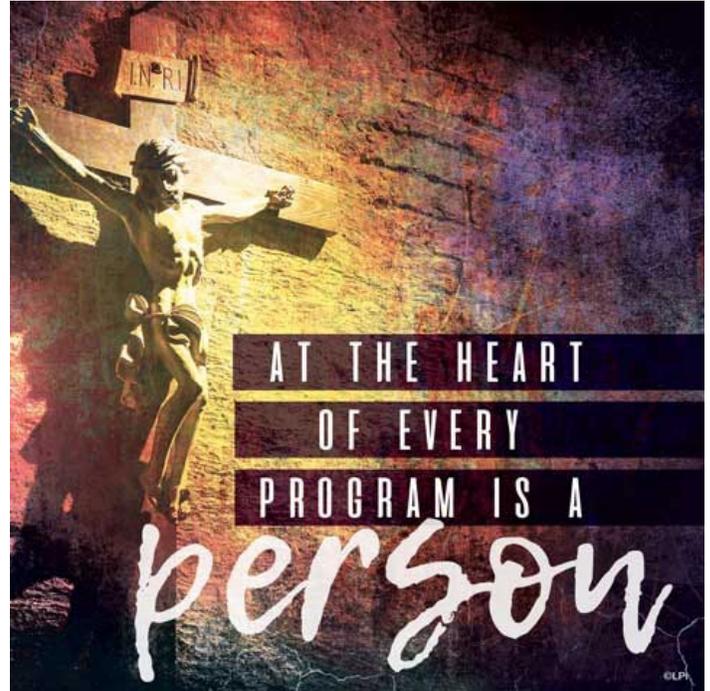
Today, I am full of hope because of all the talk about the new evangelization and a renewed emphasis on leading people to a real relationship with Jesus Christ. But at the same time, I see many of the same old traps that lead to cults of personality, blind faith in the latest idea or process, and the sin of feeling superior to others. If you are in a particular group that thinks a certain way, you are truly doing God's will. If you are not, apparently you just don't seem to get it.

Some things I have heard people of good faith say about other people of the same faith are downright nasty. I am not talking about people who differ in their belief of theological truth. I am talking about people who differ in their understanding of how someone evangelizes and helps others encounter the real living Christ.

I led an RCIA group for over twenty years. I would like to think that it was one with a foundation of disciple-making and real evangelization. I look at our parish today and I see many people who are now fully initiated into the Catholic Church and live active lives of faith. Absent from my sight are also several others that have drifted away. They all heard the same message. We introduced them all to the same Lord.

I am a huge supporter of [Cursillo](#) and other retreat experiences. I love [Alpha](#), the diocesan-based Totus Tuus program, and evangelization movements for all ages. I have seen these move people and bring them into profound relationships with Jesus. Many of the best stewards in the Church have been formed by these experiences. However, there are still many I know who have had the same experiences and don't experience a deeper relationship with the Lord. Some of them have even left the Church. But again, they all received a similar message. They were all introduced or reintroduced to the same Lord.

We can beat ourselves up or argue with one another about why this is the case, but then we have totally disregarded reality. We fall into these traps because we believe that we are sowers of seed. We believe that a better program will sow more seeds, better quality seeds, or sow them in richer soil. But what is the truth?



Jesus explains the parable of the sower after he tells it and it is clear that he is the sower. You and I are called to be seeds, but we are not the sower. Our programs, processes, and initiatives are important, but they will never be the answer for everyone. Jesus Christ is the answer for everyone. How one receives the seed Jesus plants in his or her heart has more to do with the individual rather than any program.

We are called to be instruments of peace and ambassadors of grace. We must proclaim boldly the Gospel. We must find ways of reaching the ends of the earth with the good news. As true mature disciples of Jesus Christ, we must give evidence of the real living Christ in all that we say and do. However, we are never to make ourselves more important than the One who calls us to action. May we be seeds ready to be planted by the Sower and may we allow him to be what makes all the difference.

Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS

PRAYER

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
all I have and call my own.
You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.
Amen.

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