

MISCONCEPTIONS OF CATHOLICS...

Last Sunday after Mass, I was speaking to a very good parishioner who is quite concerned about the state of the Catholic church today and how people are practicing their faith. This man, who taught religion here at St. Charles, spoke to me about what he called "Misconceptions" of some Catholics.

When I pressed him on that point he explained that a number of Catholics currently have rather strange ideas about what our religion teaches and its doctrines. One of the misconceptions he explained, was that some people now believe that you do not have to attend mass after you are 62 years old! Well, we never retire from being Catholics and going to mass.

Secondly, he told me that a good number of Catholics feel that missing mass on Sunday is not a sin anymore. Well, I have to admit, that's one misconception that I have heard before. However, the Catechism of the Church tells us that the Sunday Mass is a serious obligation: "On Sundays and Holydays of Obligation, the faithful are bound to attend mass." (Catechism#2180).

A priest told me that one time he went to conduct a wake service for a man at a funeral home near his parish in Queens. The distraught widow met him at the casket and said to him, "Father, Joe didn't go to mass very much on Sundays, but that's not the most important thing is it?" The priest said he didn't want to upset her in her grief, but he thought to himself in response to the comment, "Yes! It certainly is the most important thing!" In this regard, maybe some of us priests are at fault because we have not taught about how important it is to go to mass on the Lord's Day.

Misconceptions often come from a lack of knowledge about the Catholic religion. One time I was giving out Holy Communion on Ash Wednesday in my first parish, Immaculate Heart of Mary in Scarsdale, New York. A woman came up on the communion line, and I held the host up and said, "Body of Christ." She yelled, I didn't come here for that, I want the ashes!" Of course, she should have known that ashes are just a sacramental and even though they are blessed, ashes are not as great as the Holy Eucharist, the Lord's own body and blood.

Perhaps one of the worst misconceptions that I encountered over the years was from a very nice man at St. Patrick's Parish in Yorktown Heights, New York. He objected to something I said in my Sunday homily. As it turned out what he objected to was this statement, "The most important job that we have in this life is to try to save our soul." Well, I was flabbergasted! I never thought anyone would object to that.

The reason he gave for his criticism was the fact that, "We are all saved already by the Cross of Christ." I explained to him that certainly Jesus achieved salvation for us all by his death on the cross, but that we are also free to accept or reject that great gift which was given to us. We have to do our part to "Save our Soul" by living morally, by praying and receiving the sacraments.

All of us need to "Clear Up" the misconceptions that we might have about our Catholic faith. Reading and studying the Catechism could be a great help in that regard. Our study of religion should not end in the eighth grade! Let us rather profess the truth in love and grow more deeply in the knowledge of God!

*Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome*