

PANCAKES AND CENTRIFUGES

Carissimi,

Each Sunday as I look out upon the vast sea of humanity arrayed before me at Holy Mass - ok, there are only a few hundred of you, but for prosaic purposes indulge me for a moment - I am moved to contemplate the wonder of that scarcely fathomable system called "The Catholic Parish."

How is it that such a disparate and dissimilar congregation congregates to form such an unlikely entity? Only a slender sliver of you really wish to associate with each other outside of the mandatory one hour per week (that is 1/168th or .59% of one's time). But still, associate we do each Sunday, in perhaps a way that from the outside might seem to be lacking in conviviality but from the "inside" is quite intimate indeed.

Certainly our contact with one another as we fulfill our religious obligations has the effect of fostering new friendships and relationships. But overall that is the minority report. When we do get close to one another there is always the danger that the centrifuge will kick in. We at times collide like kids riding bumper cars at the amusement park. We might even stomp on each other's toes with cleated shoes, all in the interest of improving the parish.

It's as if we are content knowing that we have secured the essential bond with one another through our common worship of the Almighty. By uniting myself to God I thereby unite myself to all those who have done likewise. There are a great number of Catholics who just want to slip in and out unnoticed (out the side door so as to avoid having to shake the priest's hand - I am not unaware!) quietly sitting in a corner of the church. We need little sanctuaries of peace so that our sunburned souls can heal in God's presence. That's why church architects must provide hiding spots for us.

Jesus is within those walls. Yes, He is in the midst of the community also, where two or three are gathered. We cannot always handle each other. We are called to a sublime charity for our fellow man. But at this precise moment it might be best to keep our distance. Let's love each other from our respective corners.

Where am I heading with all this incomprehensible rambling? It almost sounds like I am disinviting folks to the pancake breakfast! I'm not of course. We need your involvement to make our parish vibrant. But the Church is big enough to accommodate us where we're at, as long as we're working on it.

And so I am marveling at the cohesion of our tiny community despite the vagaries of human nature. I am marveling at the fact that week after week the exceedingly complex aggregation of carbon-based units called The Faithful come in a great collective act of humility to kneel before the altar of the Most High God.

In that corporate worship we have a force and a unity to contend with.

Pace e bene,

Don Francesco