

27th Sun OT-A'17

"Catholic Services Appeal 2017"

Fr. Jeff Nicolas

A couple of Saturdays ago, while on orders with the Guard, I had an interesting opportunity to visit a local mosque (Lighthouse Peace Center) for their "Come and Meet Us" event. As Pope Francis encourages us, I wanted to meet these people face to face and learn more about their "story." I had never been in a mosque before and found them very welcoming.

Established as a religion by Mohamed over a twenty-three year period in the 7th century, one of the things they taught me is that the word "Islam" means "Peace." Something for which they correctly said everyone hungers. They also went out of their way to express their belief that Jesus is highly respected in their belief, and several of the Christian visitors expressed surprise at "how similar our Christian beliefs seem to be to theirs." But here is the thing... they were quite clear in their expression of their belief that Jesus is just another prophet in a line of prophets, the last and greatest of which (according to them) is Mohamed. According to their belief Jesus is just a man, and not the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

Now as a Church we have seen this misbelief before, the First Council of Nicaea was convened in the year 325 to counter this fallacy. The Nicene Creed we profess every Sunday names our fundamental belief that Jesus is more than just human... Jesus is fully God and fully Human. Jesus is our Savior! Jesus is Lord!

Jesus Christ is the real way to God's peace; a peace only Jesus gives (John 14:27... "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give it to you as the world gives. So, don't let your hearts be troubled, and don't be afraid.") We hear this whenever we are about to receive Holy Eucharist in the Mass.

By our baptisms we are grafted to Christ, and living through Him we abide in his peace. "Serenity" is the closest word I know that gets to this peace Jesus gives (Right with God / Balanced / Fulfilling our purpose in life of being Christ's hands, heart, and presence in the world).

Catholic Services Appeal is our annual opportunity do this very thing throughout our Archdiocese. Another manifestation of our Catholic respect for life, our participation in CSA affords us the opportunity to leverage our influence to partner with all 110 parishes of the Archdiocese in advancing our common mission: walking with families in need lending a hand up through Catholic Charities; educating our future priests and tending to our retired pastors; training our volunteers who teach our children religion, or minister at our Masses; feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the imprisoned, welcoming the stranger fleeing persecution... in all of these ways and more our participation in the Catholic Services Appeal proclaims our belief that Jesus is Lord!

Last year St. Bernadette won first place in overall CSA participation! 539 of us participated (two more than St. James in Elizabethtown). Archbishop Kurtz jokingly told some of our parish leadership that he had to send counselors to E-town to help them cope with coming in second! THIS IS WHAT OUR VICTORY LOOKED LIKE (show ping pong balls).

I want to win again this year. I want our parish to be the model the other 109 parishes of our Archdiocese can aspire to become. Therefore, in honor of our ten-year anniversary I want to increase our participation by 10%... here is what that will look like (show 54 balls). (Share my drawing for a dinner plan.)

Join me and declare through your participation in this year's Catholic Services appeal that you are **grateful to God for your blessings;**

**that you are a proud member of St. Bernadette;**

**and that Jesus Christ is Lord!**

Then, as St. Paul writes today, as we "keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen... (*as we live out our faith in generosity*) then the God of Peace will be with you."