

## Questions That People like to Ask Priests

Whenever I am invited to a wedding reception or some kind of reception that follows a church event – the inevitable questions are asked of me (and I assume most other priests). Questions like “...Father, when did all these changes take place at mass.” – boy is that a dead give away ☹. Or another might be “...I have a friend that has had difficulty getting married in her church” or “The priest will not baptize my child because we do not belong to the church.” But my all time favorite is “Father, what do you do from Monday to Friday?” All of these questions and more are at times repetitive to me – but not to the one asking the question. I wish some of them never had to be asked in the first place – but I know it took a lot of trust and comfortableness to even ask them.

I recall a visit not long ago to a bookstore trying to use up some gift certificates. I browsed through the ‘how to’ section. Besides how to lose weight painlessly, there were scores of books on how to be truly happy – how to succeed without really trying – how to get along with your spouse or others – and many versions of the old standby “how to win

friends and influence people.” Each author promises to uncover the secret of a happy and fulfilled life – as though they had captured it themselves.

I reflect often on what might be considered a “missing link” in the search for happiness and fulfillment. Family, in whatever model it takes, seems to be the place to start. The nurturing presence of parent models gives direction to our lives and, with proper wisdom, allows us to grow at our own pace with a foundation that is always reliable. From family comes the inner dimension of our life – faith or the spiritual journey. It is here that God speaks and a sacred relationship is born. How well we take responsibility for that relationship can make all the difference, in my opinion, as to how happy and fulfilled we can become.

Many people who engage me in conversation often ask another question, “...I do not understand why God allows tragedy and misfortune to happen to us – and because I cannot find the answer to those questions, I feel distant from him or a church.” I certainly can relate to that kind of frustration and

even anger – it happens and we want answers NOW. But answers cannot come in a human way – only in the inner dimension of our lives. That is how God works – he embraces us from within and assists us in finding answers to our questions – and this is where the real problem lies – how does he assist us. For me it comes from developing a faith life – a spiritual journey. I know that it started when I was very young – but lots of things have happened since then. Real faith comes through the “messy stuff” in life and looking for God in the midst of it. A new year is a perfect time to get “messy” and begin to confront “stuff” – “Clean out our closets” so to speak.

I am somewhat prejudice here – but I feel the church community is where God can most actively be found and assist us in dealing with the “messy” stuff. The church community is where the “messy stuff” often finds itself. Through a sound and healthy relationship with a church community – we can find God very actively involved in answering our questions. A good experience of faith can also lead us to inner peace – where no one can touch us – where it just you and God. When that happens

than church and community make sense. So, to all my friends who so graciously ask me questions – may you never stop doing it. But let those questions find answers in the place where God is for you – when that happens the “church” will really make a difference in your life.

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