

Red Mass Brunch Remarks 2018
September 30, 2018
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That great Catholic author, Flannery O'Connor once wrote: "The Church's nature is to survive all crises-in however battered a fashion."

In these closing remarks, I will not reflect today on the details of our current crisis in the Church. For sure, you have already read and heard so much in recent weeks.

I rather wish to reflect on our proposed response as lay leaders in the Church—where you, and I as a priest, can contribute at this time in history to building up and renewing the Church and our faith with the help of God's love and grace for each one of us. Most of you, after all, are members of this great John Carroll Society or friends of the Society—all leaders in some way.

Crisis management and best business practices have their uses, but they cannot replace true Catholic leadership, which is grounded in personal holiness, our call to holiness that we received on the day of our Baptisms. And holiness is possible and should be our aim in life!

We should not be afraid of being holy, either, or becoming more and more holy. Holiness will take away none of our joy or vitality or energy in life. Quite the opposite!

Now this is the particular time to rise up as leaders in the Church, in our families and workplaces. It is our time to show those who are hurting and whose faith is in crisis, or weak, exactly what it means to walk with Christ and draw daily strength from His living body, the Church.

In his Apostolic Exhortation entitled Gaudete et Exsultate (on the call to holiness in today's world), Pope Francis wrote:

"I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God's people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious

who never lose their smile. In their daily perseverance I see the holiness of the Church militant. Very often it is a holiness found in our next-door neighbours, those who, living in our midst, reflect God's presence. We might call them "the middle class of holiness".[\[4\]](#) [\(7\)](#)

A life of holiness has to do with the life of God in each of us and our life in Him. A preliminary question, then, is what does it mean for us to live in Christ? What does it mean that Christ lives within us? Christianity is not only a list of commands and prohibitions, as important as they are to keep us on the straight and narrow, but Christianity is a joyful way of living. When intentionally lived, the Christian way of life is a way of living that is different than other ways of life. It is a walk with Jesus. And friendship with Jesus is precisely where Christianity begins.

This is only possible, my dear friends, when we have an on-going relationship with Jesus Christ. And that takes time and effort to develop. Life in Christ, gives credibility to our faith and religion. That is the heart of the Catholic faith. It is a life of prayer, of regular reception of the sacraments, of compassionate outreach for those in need. And it results in sharing this life with others and not being afraid.

It is a way of life that gives us genuine joy and hope as we look forward ultimately to eternal life with God. It gives us that present assurance that Jesus, Son of the living God-- in the power of the Holy Spirit-- is walking with us individually and is a living presence in His Church, which we refer to as the Body of Christ. He never abandons us even when we are upset, angry or in crisis. His Body, moreover, is alive and always in need of purification because it, His body, the Church, is always made up of both saints and sinners.

In our daily walk, then, with Christ, our walk on the journey of faith as we deepen our life in Christ, the call and gift of holiness are essential ingredients.

Being holy is the ID card of being a Christian. It means being set aside for Christ and living a life in Him. It makes us credible as His followers. As John Carroll Society members and friends, we are on that journey together.

God bless you all!