

## **AUGUST 24 - 21ST SUNDAY IN O.T.**

"But who do you say that I am?" This question, posed by Jesus to his closest disciples, is put to all believers. It is one thing to repeat what we have been taught, but allowing that teaching to reach deep into our hearts is the work of a lifetime. As Catholics, we come to know Jesus through His Word, His Church, and through those who share our faith.

For most of us, our faith journey began with our parents or grandparents. They taught us about Jesus in our early years. I love seeing a small child being taught to bless themselves with holy water upon entering the church, or how to make the Sign of the Cross. By bringing young children to church, they literally grow up surrounded by the sights and sounds and symbols of the faith. They see all the people gathered together in one place singing and praying.

Our learning about Jesus continued in a Catholic grade school or in Faith Formation classes. Perhaps this getting to know Jesus was expanded through involvement in youth ministry or by attending a Catholic high school. For some adults, learning about Jesus was the focus of their Rite of Christian Initiation experience. I hope that, for all of us, seeing the fulfillment others have because of their relationship with Jesus continues to encourage us as we encourage others to deeper faith in Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God.

For me, and for a good number of priests from our diocese, including Fr. Vamos, there was a particular place where I came to a better understanding of our faith and all the different ways I could be enriched in my commitment to Jesus. That place was St. Meinrad Seminary in southern Indiana. The Benedictine monks of St. Meinrad Archabbey have been preparing men for the priesthood for almost 160 years.

At St. Meinrad I developed my love for the beauty of the Liturgy and central place the Eucharist should hold in every Catholic's life. I was also introduced to the Word of God on a deeper level as the guide to shape and mould my life. My experience of the academic and spiritual formation offered by the monks of St. Meinrad is something I will treasure, and a treasure I will share with others, the rest of my life.

Since the 1970's St. Meinrad has also been preparing men and women for lay ministry in the Church. They offer a program for permanent deacons and a sabbatical program for "seasoned" priests. Each summer, hundreds of young people participate in the "One Bread, One Cup" conferences where they study our Catholic teaching on the Eucharist and the Mass, and learn practical skills in liturgical ministries that they can use when they return to their parishes.

St. Meinrad also has a retreat center where private and organized retreats are offered throughout the year to help those who attend to nourish their faith. And, of course, St. Meinrad Archabbey is a 160 year old monastery where the monks have been praying five times a day for you, for me, and for all God's children. In times of distress, when we're

frightened or feeling alone, you and I can take comfort in knowing that the monks are praying for us ... five times a day!

Every other year, the Bishop schedules a "St. Meinrad Sunday" like today. Like all Church organizations, St. Meinrad depends upon the help they receive from the faithful like you and me. We can help continue the work of St. Meinrad in three important ways: 1) by praying for them and praying for vocations, 2) by making a pilgrimage to visit "the Hill", and 3) by making a financial gift to support the Monastery and Seminary.

In the week ahead, all of us - including myself - will receive a letter from the leader of St. Meinrad, Archabbot Justin. He will ask us to consider making a financial gift to help sustain the ministry of the monks, especially in seminary and in their retreat work. I especially ask you to think about the countless hours the monks spend in prayer for us. Monastic life is the engine room of the Church providing the 'spiritual steam' the Church needs for her life of prayer, ministry, and charity.

"Who do you say that I am?" This is not a one-time question to which we give a one-time response. Each and every day we are called to renew our faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Each and every day we are challenged to allow our faith in Jesus to guide and shape us. Through prayer, study, and participation in the life and ministry of the Church, each of us can deepen our relationship with the Christ, the Son of God. What an awesome privilege we have been given!