

Good evening. Thank you Fr. Michael for this opportunity to talk about our amazing faith community here at the Cathedral of the Assumption.

I'm not accustomed to being at this particular mass on Saturday night and seeing some of your faces. It's always nice to see new folks and meet new friends.

I am more regularly at our 5:30 Sunday p.m. Mass. You see, years ago when I was searching for a church, this is my story on how I became a member of this community of faithful. I'm a cradle Catholic and have attended Catholic school through 12 years, and have always attended Mass on Sundays. There was a time when I found myself a bit adrift of a specific church, and even though I was still attending Mass and was not away from the church, I really did not have a church "home" so to speak. During my roaming days, I like to refer to them as roaming Catholic instead of Roman Catholic, I found myself at a mass here at the Cathedral. It was right before Lent and Fr. Knott was the pastor. He mentioned that he would be doing a Lenten program entitled, "Consciously Christian Deliberately Catholic." I found that title intriguing and myself and a friend decided that we would attend these sessions, each Wednesday during Lent. The first session we attended, The Cathedral Singers provided the musical prayer. The opening hymn was "Lead Me Guide Me." I guess you could say it kind of spoke to me, as I turned to my friend, and said, "if I were ever to join this church, that is the group I would like to sing with." At the end of that Lenten season, my neighbor was joining the Catholic Church through the RCIA program here at the Cathedral. The RCIA class does a walk of prayer through Cave Hill Cemetery each Holy Saturday morning, and she asked me to join her. I said, "yes." While on that walk one of the sponsors approached me and asked if I was a parishioner, as she had not met me before. I replied that I was not, but that I had attended the Lenten program throughout Lent, and she then spontaneously asked me if I sing!! I quickly responded, "well certainly not by myself." She told me she was a member of the Cathedral Singers and that I should think about joining the group. They were always looking for new members. I told her how much I had enjoyed the music they provided that first night. I decided I would attend Holy Saturday liturgy that evening at the Cathedral, and at the reception following the service, I felt a hand on my shoulder and a voice say, "I hear I'm supposed to listen to you sing." It was our beloved Larry Love making that statement. My quick response, "Oh Lord, I don't sing by myself." The lady who had spoken to me was present and said, "come on, I'll sing with you." I quickly found myself singing away with "Jesus Christ has risen today." Well folks, that was 26 years ago and I'm still singing with the Cathedral Singers each Sunday night at 5:30 Mass. You see it took just a little bit of encouragement from others to get me involved. Believe me, the path has been well worth it.

We are called to much through our Holy Baptism. The various opportunities for service here at the Cathedral lead and guide us on this calling. I recall at the end of 2018 attending one of our management meetings at work. Our boss asked each of us to go around the table and state one word which would lead to our focus for year 2019. I heard words of balance, focus, steadfastness, all good words, along with excellent explanations of why those words were chosen. When it came my turn, I answered a bit differently. You see, I was retiring at the end of January in 2019, so I found my thoughts shifting a bit from work related needs, and balancing

work with home life. So I remember saying that my thoughts took me on a bit different path. My word was BAPTISM. I had worked so hard for 47 years and had balanced work, home, and personal life. I answered that question focused on my new non-work life. I wanted to honor my Baptism a bit more with my newfound freedom.

The opportunities I've had here have been so enriching. Our lunch program extends an awesome opportunity to serve our daily lunch guests. Operating our lunch program 7 days a week, extends the invitation for your active participation. Any amount of service is appreciated. I personally work each Wednesday morning, while some do every other week, or once a month. Any contribution is appreciated. If you can chop vegetables, dish up salad, fruit salad, tray desserts ... you have the talents needed for this job. This service has enriched my life in so many ways. I have met new friends who volunteer with me, we laugh and have a good time while providing this service, but honestly, seeing the faces of our lunch guests and hearing them say, as they head out after eating, with really no home to go to but look at us and say, "Thank you and God bless you" ... it can truly take your breath away. I have found this an awesome way to honor my Baptism.

Recently the Cathedral worked with and sponsored, along with Catholic Charities, a Congolese refugee family. I am honored to be one of the team working with our new family. To stand back at the airport and watch the smiles and elation when this family reunited, after several years, with a family member, along with friends who had been in the same camp with them ... was truly humbling. God was the only person who knew that He had put a special place in my heart for this sweet family. I never imagined that I would know a family from the Congo, let alone become friends. I'm so thrilled I found this spot in my heart that God gave me. I know now that it has always been here, just waiting and reserved just for them.

I have been blessed three years in a row as being a sponsor in the RCIA program. To walk this path with participants who are to be baptized and confirmed, or confirmed for those already baptized, is a joyful journey for sure. The past two years I was blessed to assist my person into the baptismal font and to witness their baptism followed by their confirmation. The first year, my catechumen was a friend I had known for almost 40 years. I had invited her to Good Friday services with me the year before, and she attended that service and Holy Saturday, and then the next RCIA class she joined. She asked me to be her sponsor. This was my first experience with our RCIA program, and I loved it. Last year I was a sponsor for a new person, who had recently moved to Louisville. I met a new friend and went on her journey with her. I can tell you it is a special feeling for sure. This year I am a sponsor once again for a lady who will be confirmed into the Catholic faith. As a cradle catholic, the RCIA program has given me a much deeper understanding of our Catholic faith. It has enriched my life and helps me honor my Baptism.

In Spring of 2019 I became a Eucharistic minister. I attend noon Mass on Wednesday's, following my morning in our kitchen. I so look forward to my Wednesday's spent at our Cathedral. I have never had such a feeling as I did the first time I served as a Eucharistic

minister. To look a person in the eye and to offer them the body or blood of Christ is basically indescribable.

I talked, at the beginning, of my original path to the Cathedral Singers. And I'll end with these comments. When I originally joined the singers I thought of it as choir practice once a week and singing at Mass. Twenty-six years later, that trivializes it way too much. Over the years our choir group has celebrated weddings, births of children, baptism of children, births of grandchildren, and yes, sorrowfully, we have had way too many funerals. But the friendship and the bonds with these wonderful people, that I originally said "yes" to when asked to serve, has truly been one of the biggest blessings in my life

Twenty six years ago, someone asked me to consider being a part of them. Let me extend that same invitation to all of you here this evening, please come be a part of us. Next week, information will be available at the end of each Mass in the undercroft of the various opportunities, along with the commitment needed. You can choose as much or as little as you are able to contribute. I named only a few, as I know them personally, but there are many many ways to honor your Baptism. Please prayerfully consider the path best for you at this time, and please join us.

Since I'm a wee bit Irish, I'll leave you with this Irish blessing, that is often part of a Baptism, and may help with your prayerful discernment.

"May God grant you always a sunbeam to warm you, a moonbeam to charm you, a sheltering angel so nothing can harm you. Laughter to cheer you, faithful friends near you, and wherever you pray, heaven to hear you."

God Bless You!