

“You don’t get it!...You just don’t get it!”...Is there anything more frustrating than when you’re trying to get your point across to someone...trying to get them to understand what you’re saying, and they just don’t get it?... Am I right?...This happens a lot with parents and their teenagers, doesn’t it?...In both directions, too ...”Mom/Dad, you just don’t get it.”...It happened a lot with Jesus and His disciples, and - as we just heard in our Gospel – with Jesus and the crowds who were following Him from place to place...That’s because Jesus was usually operating on a spiritual level when everyone else was thinking about physical, material, earthly things...Most of the time, Jesus’ message would go right over their heads.

Let’s recap what happened in today’s Gospel...Jesus had amazingly fed thousands of people the day before with a few loaves and fishes,...and many of those people had followed Him and His disciples to the other side of the lake...Jesus tells them straight up that the only reason they came after Him was because He had fed them a meal, ...and they were hungry again...He says, “Listen, believe in me as the one that God the Father has sent,...the Messiah.”... And they say, “Ok, Jesus, show us more of your magic and we’ll believe in you.” ...But they had just seen a huge miracle 12 hours earlier! You see what was happening? They wanted Jesus to do miracles, not so they would believe in Him, but because they wanted Him to take care of all of their needs...He could do that with a simple wave of His hand...They’d never have to worry about food to eat, clothes to wear, a house to live in...They had followed Him for selfish reasons, for what He could do for them,...not because they believed He was really the Christ,... God in the flesh...

See, here’s the thing...Jesus recognized that these people were only fans of His...you know, they liked to hang around Him,..see what miracle He might do next,...maybe even feed them again...But Jesus wanted to teach them and help them learn about who He was,...so that they would become His followers,... not just fans...They were fans because of what He had done for them,...and what they expected Him to do for them...They were not followers yet because they didn’t get who Jesus was...They didn’t get that He was the one sent by God. ...They didn’t get that He was offering them more than what they needed for this life...He was offering them what they needed for eternal life: Himself – the Bread of Life!

Well there’s a lot more going on in this Gospel, but I want to stick with this idea of how – as Christians - we are either a fan of Jesus,..or a follower of Jesus...If I’m a Christian, I am one or the other...And I’ll tell you,...Jesus doesn’t want fans; He wants followers...He’s pretty clear about this,...not only in today’s Gospel,..but all through the Gospels...Being a fan requires doing almost nothing...Sure, it may mean coming on Sunday and spending an hour in church,...joining in the prayers,...maybe the singing, ...giving a few dollars...Fans of Jesus will come and listen to what He has to say, which – for the most part – makes them feel good...These are all good things,... but just being a fan doesn’t require us to change in any way...We can keep doing the same things we’ve always done...If I’m just a fan of Jesus, I’m not required to change as a person,...I’m not required to serve, or to sacrifice...or to care.

Now some of you might be thinking, “Hold on a minute, Dcn Ron, isn’t believing in Jesus enough?...If I believe He is the Son of God and He suffered and died for my sins....If I believe He promised to always be with me,...to give me strength when I’m sick,...to be there in my troubles,...to give me courage when I’m afraid,...to forgive me when I repent...If I believe all that, isn’t that enough?”...Well, yah, that’s enough to make you a big fan of Jesus....because of what He’s done for you, and for what you expect Him to do for you...But that doesn’t make you a follower of Jesus Christ...A follower believes all those things about Jesus too, but a follower’s faith goes deeper...It’s more than a head faith: knowing the facts about J....It’s a heart faith: a

heart connection with Jesus...where the believer tries to take on the heart of Jesus,...by serving...by sacrificing...by caring...by loving...as Jesus did...to continue what He began...to continue building up the Kingdom of God here on earth...Fifty years ago, President JFK challenged Americans to live by these words: "It's not what your country can do for you; it's what you can do for your country."...Followers of Jesus are challenged to live by these very similar words: *It's not what Jesus can do for you; it's what you can do for Jesus.*

It's not about what Jesus can do for us...He's already done more for us than any of us deserve. Just look up at that cross!...If He never does another thing for me,...If He totally ignores me for the rest of my life,...I still could never do enough to show Him my thanks and gratitude for what He's already done,...especially for taking the punishment for my sins... None of us could ever do enough for Jesus,...but we can all do more than we are doing...

You might remember the movie *Schindler's List*....Oskar Schindler was a German-Catholic businessman who supported the Nazi regime during the holocaust...until he witnessed firsthand the mass murders of innocent men, women and children...This so shocked his soul that he used almost all of his money and risked his own life to save 1200 Jews from the Nazi death camps... by bribing and duping Nazi authorities into letting Jewish prisoners work in his factory...The most moving moment in the film was near the end...In a very emotional scene, Schindler's workers were saying goodbye and thanking him,...and as he looked out at the hundreds of human beings he had saved from certain death, he broke down weeping,...and as he fell into the arms of his assistant, he whispered, "I could've done more...I could've saved more people if I hadn't wasted so much money...I could've done so much more."...He had certainly acted as a true follower of Jesus Christ,...Even so, he knew he could've done more... Fans or followers, we can all do more for Jesus....He deserves it!

OK, here's what it all boils down to...I can be a big fan of Jesus... I can wave the Jesus flag,...wear a T-shirt that says *Jesus Christ Superstar*...and a cross around my neck...I can do that because of what Jesus has done for me..I can do that...I can be His biggest fan... Or I can take to heart His words: "Whoever wishes to be my disciple must take up his cross and follow me."...If I am to be His disciple – His follower - I have to take up my cross...and follow Him. ...And a big part of my cross is to do good works for Jesus... As followers of Jesus Christ...we are to do the Good Works that Jesus did when He walked the earth...He told us we would in John's Gospel: "Whoever believes in me will do the **works** I have been doing, and they will do even **greater** things."...That's what He said,...that after He's gone, we would do even more than He did...He needs us to continue what He started, continue building up the Kingdom of God that He started.

My friends, there is so much suffering in our world,...so much pain... so much need...so much hopelessness...so much injustice... so much uncaring...because too many believers are just fans of Jesus Christ and not followers... Fans of Jesus have got to get up off there fannies...and decide to become followers...because:

Jesus isn't going to feed the hungry...Jesus isn't going to clothe the naked....Jesus isn't going to build a Habitat house...We have to do it.

Jesus isn't going to take an elderly person shopping or to a doctor's appointment or to Mass... Jesus isn't going to be a volunteer hospice caregiver at Advent House....Jesus isn't going to work to end the killing of the unborn...We have to do it.

Jesus isn't going to teach in our School of Religion... Jesus isn't going to become a foster parent or adoptive parent for a child who's been abused or abandoned... Jesus isn't going to

give a car to a single Mom instead of trading it in, because she needs it to keep her job. We have to do it.

Jesus isn't going to build a school in Kenya...Jesus isn't going to tutor disadvantaged kids in the city ... Jesus isn't going to be a Stephen Minister to a fellow Christian who's going through a difficult time...We have to do it.

Jesus isn't going to petition our elected representatives to make decisions that save lives and improve lives here and around the world...and to hold them accountable...We have to do it.

Now if you're thinking that you're just not able to do these kinds of Good Works,...that you'll just have to remain a fan of Jesus,...listen again to His words in today's Gospel: "I am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to me will not hunger."... He's telling us that when we are fed by His words - His teachings - and nourished with the Eucharistic bread - his flesh - He will take what little we have, no matter how meager it is,...our gifts, our talents, our time, our resources, our strength, ...and He will multiply them as He did the loaves and fishes...so that they become more than enough for us to do what He asks us to do.

So, as we come forward in a few minutes to partake of this Bread of Life,...let this be our prayer: "Dear Jesus, I want to be your follower...Please give me what I need to be the best one I can be. " AMEN!