

SMALL CHURCH COMMUNITY

Having made the decision to try to get more Catholics to read the bible found me attending a group meeting at the Charles Borromeo Center in Romeoville, Illinois one Sunday afternoon.

Sister Marylyn, a Franciscan sister who we had already spent many years in her scripture study class at St. Mary Church in Mokena was at that time forming a core group to plan and implement a program for scripture study, at St. Mary Church. She wanted facilitators to run the planned scripture study meetings and plan or approach to the same end to organize and have scripture or bible study meetings which was now a requirement in the Joliet dioceses. The requirement was to at least offer script study or small church groups. Dioceses are geographical man made boundaries like classes in the Reform Church or synods in other denominations.

The Bishop Imish of the Joliet dioceses was supporting this effort by requiring all parishes to have in place, or offer, within two years scripture study groups. Twelve of us, from St. Mary Church, were attending this meeting prior to starting our own program for scripture study for all interested members of St. Mary's congregation in Mokena, Illinois.

When we entered the meeting hall, which was a huge cafeteria during the week, we were each given a card board cut-out in the shape of some Christian symbol. There were approx. eight-hundred Christians in that hall that Sunday afternoon. The vast majority of them would in my opinion call themselves Catholics. This was a Catholic gathering. However I was attending two churches at that time one of which was and is affiliated with the and a member of the Reformed Church in America. See my story on how and why I was attending two churches at the same time for many years. That story I am calling: "Welcome Home Son". I was shocked to see people smoking inside that winter day but also remembering how much I missed never having a beer or wine at a Peace Church function.

So these single sheet white craft home made card-board cut-outs had many different silhouettes shapes to them for example: angels, crosses, communion wafers, mangers, churches, hallos, camels, donkeys, stars, chalices, bibles, bread loafs, fishes, hands, feet, birds, shoes, swords, shields, large shaped keys, real ink pens, real rosaries, real keys, real paper plates, real paper cups and real napkins. These are some of the card-board symbols handed out that day. I do not remember all of them although I do remember counting the total number of tables so later I could relate the miracle that had happened when I would find the time to then write about it. Now February 2001 I have made the time. Feb. 2002 posted to my Web site.

The MC, a priest, offered after several prayers offered for divine guidance and public acknowledgement that he believed that the good Christian Protestants had more written information in pamphlets and books for us to use so we should get started with whatever literature we could gather as soon as possible. He assured us that it would be ok for us to use them at this time. He acknowledged that it did not matter what we were calling our parish sponsored meetings as long as we did start or make available meetings in our homes or parishes for getting people into the divine word of God=Bible.

Page two

We were then asked to move to other tables that matched the cut-outs we all had been given. The tables were announced by symbols etc. Upon arriving at my assiged table we were all asked to introduce ourselves and talk one approx. one minute about ourselves to include the "parish" were we currently were attending.

As it happed I was the last in our group to introduce myself.

The expressed purpose of this gathering was to get information and then to share with our own parish groups, at a later time, on what other Catholic parishes were doing toward our mutual goals of scripture study groups or meetings. Some churches had already started groups years earlier and many had not, as was the case at St. Mary's although I later found out that there were already two groups meeting prior to our 21 new groups being formed for a total in 1997 through 2002 which is currently 14 groups.

My wife, during the past few years, has called me a "pushy Protestant" for my actions which used to be foreign to her for I was attending two churches. I would always defend Catholic beliefs or any false statements when they were given truths. Like never agreeing with people who were upset solely because their children were dating Catholics. I did just the reverse when in a Catholic group as any good Promise

Keeper would do. I wanted so much to make a movie. To show the Protestants that the Catholic Apostles Creed changed the capital "C" in catholic to a small "c" meaning universal church. To see sister Marilyn praying that the Protestants would not throw out the communion wafers which were not consumed. To see a Baptist in the Reformed Church end with "Welcome into the holy catholic church"
To see the word Christian used in Mass and not Catholic in greetings by the priest.

Being the sixth promise of Promise Keepers is:

"A Promise Keeper is committed to reach beyond and racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity."

Having used the sixth PK promise many times to give my opinion has always stopped the negative talk about other denominations, from caring Christians.

As my fellow Christians went around the table I heard one lady say she was attending three churches each Sunday. One with her married daughter and their family of four and a Lutheran Church with her son another grandchild and his wife. Then alone at one of the many Masses at her local Catholic Church. She had also attended a Stevens Minister conference which my wife, Lore, and I had also attended several years earlier in Elk Grove Village, Illinois.

Another woman was attending two Christian Churches and so was another man. So when I make it know my affiliation with Peace Community Church and St. Mary's. I at that time made it known that is was no accident we were all at the same table with the same desire to get more Catholics into the Bible. The other eight other people, at our table, were shocked that there were so many people who had dual allegiances. We all shared and assured them we were all there for the same reason:

That we wanted more of our fellow Catholics to read the bible and now that it was also a stated goal of Bishop Immish of the Joliet dioceses; we were all there in attendance to help attain that goal.

Page three

After seeing that there were others who shared my goals also I was so thrilled, that there were other Christians of my same belief to try to improve the number of Catholics who should be reading the bible I was really so excited.

Later in the day when each table was to share one idea aloud with the assembled group our table agreed to ask if there were any other people in that huge audience who were currently attending more than one Christian church each Sunday. There was complete silence to the question or the shock of the question.

What are the odds that all of the people, of those who were attending that assembly that Sunday, were attending more than one Christian church each Sunday were to be at single table together? I do believe all at our table realized what a special blessing it was to have all the "Protestants" at one table and to listen to our testimonies.

I left that meeting as an inspired Christian and with a very grateful heart to continue on my mission knowing only the Holy Spirit could have but us together like that to knowledge what we were attempting to do. Plus now knowing that there were others of the same mind and belief to stay the course in our goals and the realization that we are all of one body but different members as mentioned in 1 Corinthians vs.10