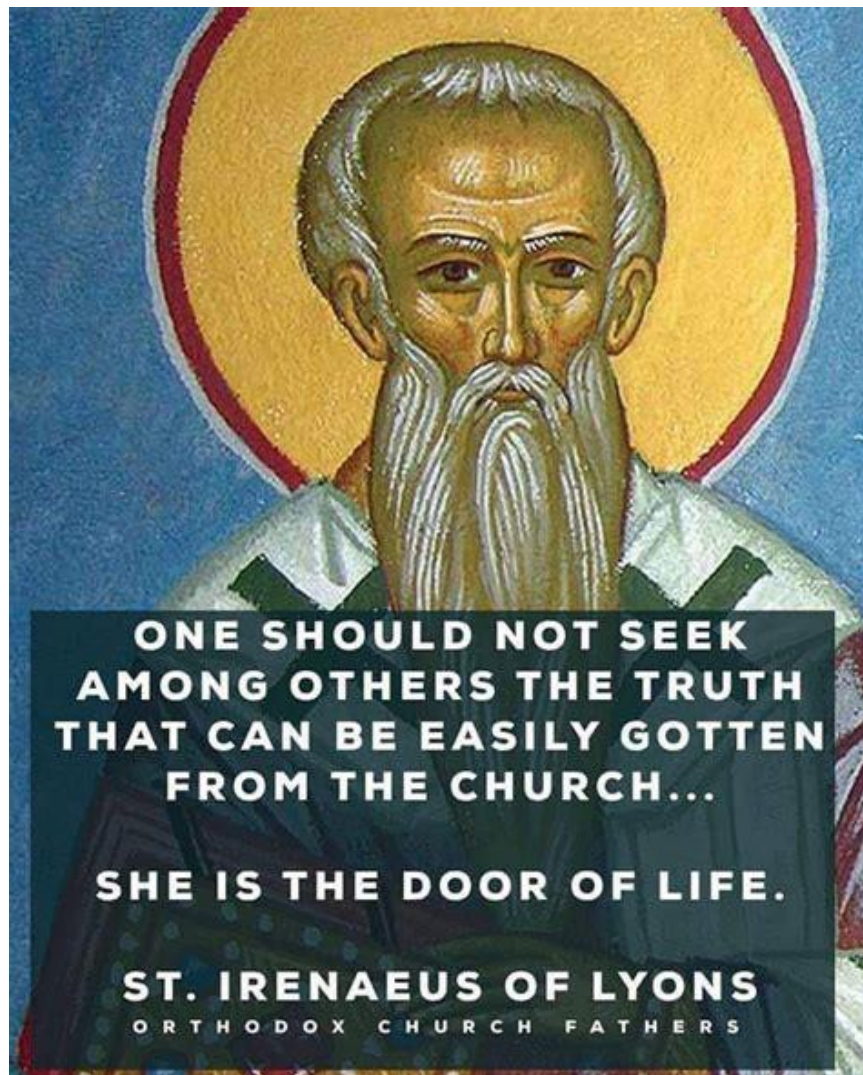


**FROM FATHER JOHN:** You are no longer aliens or foreign visitors: you are citizens like all the saints, and part of God's household. ***You are part of a building that has the apostles and prophets for its foundations,*** and Christ Jesus himself for its main cornerstone. As every structure is aligned on him, all grow into one holy temple in the Lord; and you too, in him, are being built into a house where God lives, in the Spirit. ~ Ephesians 2:19 – 22

***Blessed are the people the Lord has chosen to be his own!!!***

Once again, I want to congratulate Deacon Rich Brewers and his wife Julie on the occasion of his ordination to the Diaconate on Saturday August 20<sup>th</sup>. Please keep Rich and Julie in your prayers as he begins to serve God and the people of St. Ann Parish as an ordained deacon.



One of the things that we can learn from the Sacred Scripture is that our Lord Jesus had a plan to establish the Kingdom of God right here on earth and not just in the heavenly kingdom. This means that Church is part of our God's plan to save us from our sins, is a Divine institution rather than merely a human institution and is an instrument of God's Grace in the world.

Our Lord Jesus organized his followers in order to build up the kingdom here on earth until that day that he returns to complete His work of salvation. Scripture identifies the apostles as the foundation upon which His Church and, therefore, His Divine Plan rests. This led to the handing down of the faith from the apostles to the bishops and the teaching magisterium of the Church. The Book of Revelation gives us a vision of what the Church really is and what it means to establish the Kingdom of God.

“The angel spoke to me, saying, ‘Come here. I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ He took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance was like that of a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal. It had a massive, high wall, with twelve gates where twelve angels were stationed and on which names were inscribed, the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. There were three gates facing east, three north, three south, and three west. The wall of the city had twelve courses of stones as its foundation, on which were inscribed the twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.” ~ Rev. 21:5b – 14

This scripture passage shows the kingdom's capital city, the all-new Jerusalem, coming from heaven. The twelve gates of the city represent the twelve tribes of ancient Israel, each of which had one of our Lord Jesus' apostles as its head. The twelve apostles were truly unremarkable men when chosen by our Lord Jesus but it is their names that are inscribed in the vision from Revelation. Their witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of our faith in the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church," which we profess in the Nicene Creed on Sundays and on solemn feast days.

As Catholics, we need to keep in mind that our Church is not just some wonderful social organization that does good work in the world. It is not an association of like-minded people, it is not a club, it is not a means to meet other people. Rather, it is a Divine Institution that is part of God's Plan of Salvation that is

established to build up the Kingdom of God and lead all of us to the fulfilment of our spiritual journey as the adopted sons and daughters of God the Father.

St. John Chrysostom, Bishop, gave a homily on the First Letter to the Corinthians in which he discussed the nature of the Church. I thought I would share it with you because he makes the case that the Church must have come into existence as part of our Lord Jesus work of salvation and not as a result of merely human beings deciding to create a Church that spread throughout the world. It is entitled *The weakness of God is stronger than men*.

“It was clear through unlearned men that the cross was persuasive, in fact, it persuaded the whole world. Their discourse was not of unimportant matters but of God and true religion, of the Gospel way of life and future judgement, yet it turned plain, uneducated men into philosophers. How the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and his weakness stronger than men!

In what way is it stronger? It made its way throughout the world and overcame all men; countless men sought to eradicate the very name of the Crucified, but that name flourished and grew ever mightier. Its enemies lost out and perished; the living who waged a war on a dead man proved helpless. Therefore, when a Greek tells me I am dead, he shows only that he is foolish indeed, for I, whom he thinks a fool, turn out to be wiser than those reputed wise. So too, in calling me weak, he but shows that he is weaker still. For the good deeds which tax-collectors and fishermen were able to accomplish by God’s grace, the philosophers, the rulers, the countless multitudes cannot even imagine.

Paul had this in mind when he said: *The weakness of God is stronger than men*. That the preaching of these men was indeed divine is brought home to us in the same way. For how otherwise could twelve uneducated men, who lived on lakes and rivers and wastelands, get the idea for such an immense enterprise? How could men who perhaps had never been in a city or a public square think of setting out to do battle with the whole world? That they were fearful, timid men, the evangelist makes clear; he did not reject the fact or try to hide their weaknesses. Indeed he turned these into a proof of the truth. What did he say of them? That when Christ was arrested, the others fled,

despite all the miracles they had seen, while he who was leader of the others denied him!

How then account for the fact that these men, who in Christ's lifetime did not stand up to the attacks by the Jews, set forth to do battle with the whole world once Christ was dead – if, as you claim, Christ did not rise and speak to them and rouse their courage? Did they perhaps say to themselves: "What is this? He could not save himself but he will protect us? He did not help himself when he was alive, but now that he is dead he will extend a helping hand to us? In his lifetime he brought no nation under his banner, but by uttering his name we will win over the whole world?" Would it not be wholly irrational even to think such thoughts, much less to act upon them?

It is evident, then, that if they had not seen him risen and had proof of his power, they would not have risked so much."

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.

