

Father Grell Homily

August 4, 2019

Those of a generation of mine or older remember the Rev. Billy Graham crusades, which filled stadiums and were broadcast on prime-time TV.

A little later came someone not well-revered around here, but he had a good cause: ex-CU football coach, Bill McCartney, with his Promise-Keeper rallies for Christ.

The man who is called the father of tele-evangelists, Rev. Robert Schuller, broadcasted his "Hour of Power" from the Crystal Cathedral in Orange, CA (which, by the way, the Catholic diocese purchased a few years ago and now has re-consecrated as its Catholic cathedral).

You might know, or maybe not, that the Catholic church has also seen a rise of such massive events to proclaim Christ.

Especially, it seems, from the time of JP II till now, a great number of men's conferences, women's conferences, and youth conferences have drawn 100's, 1000's, and even 10000's of people.

From retreats to fill high schools to Steubenville Conferences which draw thousands to the crown jewel of them all, John Paul's World Youth Days.

The next of which is in 2022 in Lisbon, Portugal...plan now to go!

At these conferences, a surge of great Catholic speakers have arisen, and one of the most popular ones for youth is Father Mike Schmitz.

He is a priest of the Duluth Diocese in Minnesota, probably ordained in the early 2000's.

At the youth talks that he gives, the crowd is jazzed before he arrives on stage—praise and worship music, dancing, beach balls flying around.

Into that scene walks Father Mike, and one of his talks that I love, he quiets down the thunderous ovation and his first line is this, “You are going to die.”

You might think, “well, that’s the end of that talk.”

But surprisingly, or not surprisingly if you know Father Mike, the kids roar approval and clap like mad!

And he laughs, shushes the crowd again, and says, “And not only that, but everyone you know is going to die.”

More clapping, louder standing ovations!

But his intro to his talk is what I want as the main point of this homily, with the Father Mike story to soften the blow.

(Father Mike’s talk is on our parish’s [formed.org](https://www.formed.org) subscription, which all of you can access, or it may be in our CD kiosk in the hall/vestibule.)

Our Lord wants us to know that we are going to die, but more than that, how to prepare for it.

The parable of the farmer building larger bins resonates with us.

We are about as central in the State which is about the most central of the Lower 48, and our parishioners either work the land now, or just a generation or two, our loved ones were farmers.

We can empathize with this farmer in the parable.

Myself, I can see our Massey-Ferguson 310 combine auguring its newly-harvested milo or beans or wheat into our 1962 Chevy grain truck...

...which held a whopping 250 or 300 bushels (I'm told the trucks these days hold a little bit more).

I can visualize driving that truck to the Farmer's COOP in Beatrice, opening the end gate and watching the grain pour into the grain pit.

Bountiful harvests are beautiful!

I can also remember Dad purchasing the 80 with a 40 on top of it which was sold through private bidding...it was adjacent to our home place.

A few years later, Dad made his second and final purchase of land at a live auction.

The Jamison 80, he called it, was adjacent to the middle quarter of the south half of the section where my great-grandparents had settled in the 1880's.

Dad didn't take 10-year old, his "mini-me", to that auction, because he was serious about buying and thought I may have been a distraction.

These lands, these abundant harvests over the years...I can empathize with the farmer in the parable, and I bet you can too.

Be clear that Jesus is not dissuading abundance and success in life.

But he is saying that saying happiness is not to be found, ultimately, in possessions.

Our Grell land...what was it used for and who used a thousand years ago?

Who will have it a thousand years from now?

You see the point.

I might make it sound like my parents and us kids are rich; materially, we are blessed.

But Jesus tells us to be rich in what matters to God.

So, what matters to God?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, in its very first paragraph, seeks to give us the answer: *“God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life.”*

The only answer to what matters to God is...God.

We are made for God’s life, for God’s blessed life.

And the primary means by which we receive God’s blessed life, without any possibility of ever being obsolete, are the sacraments.

The Seven to Heaven.

Or, the highway from heaven and to heaven.

It seems to me that most people get the concept of Baptism.

That baptismal water poured over you and me changed us, it regenerated us.

It “put” God into us.

I fear we don’t see the other six sacraments as clearly, doing the same thing.

Do we notice the person who comes out of the confessional, with tears of joy, the loved one in our life who goes to confession often and how happy, healed they seem afterward?

Do we notice those who really seem to “get” the Mass, offering up their life with the bread and wine, with deep prayer poring from their bodies as they make thanksgiving in the pews?

Are we more concerned with our youth being Confirmed by the Bishop on October 28<sup>th</sup> with what we will give as a gift or encouraging them as to what they will receive?

And the same for Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders, the Sacrament of the Sick.

We are given the sacraments to receive God because being rich in what matters to God is only God.

To sum up, I would suggest a good read from Cardinal Robert Sarah.

This African cardinal boldly titled this book, “God or Nothing.”

He gives me pause, and perhaps you too, by speaking about how God communicates to us.

Looking back to Father Mike Schmitz, you are going to die. And everyone you know is going to die.

But the whole storyline can be summed up by living the choice of God...or nothing.

May we all help each other to only and always choose God.

Amen.