

**Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B
(Oct. 14, 2012)**

The Magis

A rich man who has kept all the commandments asks Jesus, “What more must I do?” But when Jesus challenges him to do more, he finds that this more is just too much and he goes away sad because he had great riches.

The question, “What more must I do?” reminds me of St. Ignatius who was always asking the same thing. What more can I do for the greater glory of God? And that “more” has become an important element of Ignatian spirituality. Ignatius told his followers to ask the same question, to strive constantly to do more for the Lord, to respond more fully to his love. Jesuits refer to this as the “Magis,” a Latin word that simply means “more.”

Now what does Ignatius mean when he asks us to be constantly trying to do more for the greater glory of God? Does he mean we have to be constantly piling activity on activity until we are exhausted with the effort to do more? I don’t think so. In the Spiritual Exercises when Ignatius asks the retreatant to contemplate the mysteries of the life of Christ, he recommends a grace to pray for, the grace to know Jesus more intimately, to love him more ardently, and to follow him more closely. For Ignatius if we really get to know Jesus more intimately we will automatically love him more ardently and so desire to follow him more closely. Join that with another Ignatian principle, finding God in all things, and we can then, I think, easily see that everything we do can be done for the love of God and in this way give everything to God, which is what Jesus asked the rich man in the Gospel to do. There really isn’t anything more than that.

Now I would like to segue from that to another consideration which at first will not seem to be connected at all, but maybe we’ll see that in point of fact it is.

Most of you are aware of an important anniversary that occurred this past week. Fifty years ago on October 11, 1962, the Second Vatican Council began its first session. Most people would say this was the most important

religious event of the twentieth century since it had repercussions far beyond the Catholic Church with representatives of other churches, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim and still others present as observers and commentators.

For the majority of Catholics at the time the most obvious effect of the Council was the changes in the way we celebrated the Liturgy. But from the perspective of the Church itself the most important work was in the areas of religious freedom and our relationship to other non-Catholic Christian churches and to non-Christian faiths.

These were far more radical than the liturgical renewal that the Council mandated.

For the average Catholic having the priest face the congregation and speak in a language they understood seemed extremely radical and many people had difficulty accepting this return to a much earlier way of celebrating the Eucharist. It was the way to carry out the Council's mandate for active participation of the congregation in the celebration.

Given the Church's history of its relationship with other churches and other faiths the Council's decrees on religious freedom and ecumenism and inter-faith concerns were actually far more radical. It's hard for us to imagine this today, especially in the United States where religious tolerance has always at least theoretically been a part of our life, but there were bishops at the Council who did not believe in religious freedom, and the decree was not easily passed. That it was accepted by the Council was in large part due to the efforts of Fr. John Courtney Murray, an American Jesuit who taught at Woodstock College.

Among other important developments at the Council was the notion of collegiality. Fr. John O'Malley recently wrote about this as follows: the most radical inward move of the Council was not to democratize the church (though it has often been described that way) but to reinstate an older, more collegial style in church governance. Under the Council's version of this teaching, known as collegiality, the papacy has the final word, but others in the Church, from the bishops to the priests and the laity, had a voice too. This notion of collegiality has probably been the least well implemented of the Council's decisions, and there is still important work to do in this area.

Now how does all this connect with where we started: what more must I do? Or St. Ignatius's notion of the magis? What more can we all do to help carry out the wishes of the Council Fathers? We can begin by coming to the lectures that are being sponsored by our parish to celebrate this anniversary. We can do more by being open to the direction in which the Council wishes to take us, and I say "open" advisedly because it seems to me that the single most important thing the Council did in all its decrees was ask the faithful to be open. Open to other ways of thinking and acting, open to other ways of worshipping. It asked us to understand that the Spirit is present everywhere and that means that the truth that the Spirit brings is also there and we must respect that. This is particularly true in our relations with non-Christian religions such as Judaism and Islam. Perhaps today with the situation in the Arab Countries of the Middle East it is most important that we have a better understanding of how God is present to these people and what that means to us.

What more can we do? Well there is plenty to do right there. How, in the light of the openness that the Council mandated, can we learn to know Jesus more intimately, love him more ardently, and follow him more closely?