

The last several years I've spent a week vacationing north of Sequim. I've rented a small cottage overlooking the Dungeness Spit, a narrow band of sand, rock and driftwood that stretches for five miles out into the Strait of Juan de Fuca. At the tip of this spit is the Dungeness Lighthouse. I've twice hiked out to the picturesque lighthouse. The light itself is now automated, and there is no permanent Lighthouse Keeper. Instead, there is a dynamic volunteer association of amateur Lighthouse Keepers. The members of the organization take turns spending 3 days out there in the Keeper's house, doing maintenance and welcoming visitors.

From the very existence of this volunteer lighthouse association, it is clear that lighthouses fascinate us. I think there is a certain romance to the job of keeping these lights going day and night for the safety of others that speaks to some people. This week I thought of those eager volunteers staffing the Dungeness Lighthouse because today I want to

preach about offering our own time as volunteers for Jesus, the Light of the World -- making Him available to others.

A lighthouse is meant as a beacon to travelers by sea – so they don't hit the rocks – but can find the safe passage to bring them home to port. I see the Eucharist as like that lighthouse, helping us get home to Heaven. There is a romantic element to volunteering at a lighthouse. But our Catholic faith tells us that if we understand what is really happening at mass, to be part of Christ's offering there is also a romance – a love-matter.

The Catholic Church in America is currently in a multi-year National Eucharistic Revival. The point of this initiative is to deepen American Catholics' love for, and appreciation of, the Eucharist at a time when we can forget the most important things amid all the chaos and turmoil of our world. Serving God and our fellow Disciples at the Eucharist is not just an individual, private act of devotion. This is also a ministry for the whole Church and world.

Jesus is the Light of the World. That white host the priest raises at the consecration, and whom we receive in communion is that light shining in the world. And that means that those who volunteer as lectors, Eucharistic ministers, altar servers, ushers, sacristans are the spiritual lighthouse keepers of the Church, helping to keep available this beacon of hope -- that saves those living in darkness and in danger of sinking and wrecking their lives. That is what happens at mass if we had the eyes of faith to see it.

Next weekend will have a Stewardship of Talent/Ministry Fair Weekend. Please pray this week about where Jesus is calling you to serve as a volunteer Eucharistic Lighthouse keeper. Explore the ministries of our parish – and, I hope, sign up for one. We need dozens of lectors, eucharistic ministers, ushers, and hospitality ministers to keep the mass shining at Sacred Heart. Did you know that at most masses on most weekends, we're scrambling to find ministers? The same few people wind up doing it all the time. That only wears them

out, but it also keeps the rest of the parishioners from the chance to serve and grow spiritually.

In the gospel today we hear a parable of a man asking his sons to work in his vineyard. Some say “Yes.” Some say, “No.” Some follow through, some don’t. But, as in last week’s parable of the Landowner hiring workers for his vineyard, God keeps asking us to help Him. And deeds matter more to God than words. What have we actually done for Him? Or is our faith just talk? While I’ve spoken of the beauty of offering oneself for the Eucharist – it’s also something the Father has a right to expect of us – as the father in the parable had a right to expect his son to work beside him in their vineyard.

When we were baptized, we were given the right, but also the duty, of serving Jesus as members of His Church. That is what God is doing today, asking each of us, “Will you go out and work with and for me?” Those volunteers at the Lighthouse recognize the beautiful possibilities in offering the sacrifice of their time. They’re excited to do

it – fix toilets and paint buildings! I’m edified and envious of that spirit.

How do we respond?

There will be tables set up in the narthex next week after mass.

There will be many offerings. Please go over and volunteer, maybe for just one hour a week with Jesus. If you sign up, don’t worry if you don’t know what to do. In the next few weeks, we will give you the training necessary to fulfill the ministry.

If you say, “Yes” to being a minister at the mass – and if you enter into that service prayerfully, conscious of the beauty you are part of – that service week after week, can change your life. And not only your life: this ministry is not just about us. You will be a part of the Lighthouse of the Lord, part of the prayer of the universal Church, as she raises her heart and hands to Christ every moment of the day, deflecting dangers away from those journeying through life, and helping them arrive at the safe harbor of heaven by shining upon them the Light of Christ.