

# Asking Too Much

Inspired by John 6:60-69

Many gathered in the Parish Hall to hear the big announcement. Fr. James had been building the excitement over the past several weeks. He didn't give many details. Rather he provided small, intriguing clues that kept everyone interested like building a mighty pyramid amid thick clouds of anticipation. The people just couldn't resist coming for the unveiling. Today was the day to open the doors and finally see what is inside.

Fr. James had hinted of a new ministry that would benefit the local community, not just their own church. It would be a chance to make an impact, to bring light and love and change to the city, and to make a real difference in people's lives. Who wouldn't get excited and want to be a part of that?!?!

The crowd was ready and the hall was buzzing with excitement. Most had their checkbooks ready. Some were looking forward to giving their weekend a real purpose. A few were hoping it would be a week-long summer work camp. They were ready to dig in! After a few attempts to quiet the auditorium everyone settled into their seats. The lights dimmed and the projector kicked on with a photo of their beautiful crucifix breaking through clouds. It was striking. The room was silent. Fr. James tapped the microphone a couple of times, cleared his throat and dove straight into the heart of the matter. "We are called to be disciples of Jesus. We are called to share the Good News. We are called to be the hands and feet of Christ – to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, bring comfort and care to those in need, to be like Him. Who would like to make a difference and fulfill the Mission of Jesus?"

The crowd roared and cheered and shouted praises! It seemed as if the hall was filled with songs of golden trumpets and the winds of cherubs' wings. This was truly the beginning of something great! "We begin all things in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," prayed Fr. James. He raised his hands high over all who had gathered before him, and led them in a beautiful prayer of blessing. He prayed for all present, and all who are in need, "that we may reach them all and serve in His name, His Spirit, and His Mercy."

Next, He began to unfold the plan. This would not be a simple, one time venture. This work would not be easy. In fact, it would require much time and energy. It would be the start of something sustainable and lasting. "As he spoke, a slide show scrolled pictures of the place he spoke about "Teams will go out to less desirable neighborhoods and unfamiliar areas to meet the people. They will have to truly invest time with them and establish relationships building trust. They will look different, talk differently, and live differently than what we are familiar with. There will be people of varied faith traditions and some who don't even believe in God, and we will treat them all with dignity and respect. We will take our time to befriend them and to truly be their friend. Just like Jesus."

A hum of whispers began spreading across the parish hall. It sounded like a swarm of bees invading the room, and Fr. James knew their stingers would be pointed directly at him. Many of the parishioners said to one another, “This ministry is hard. Who has the time and energy for this?” Some even began to leave. Since Father knew they were murmuring about this, he said to the crowd, “Does this shock you? Are you not willing to commit to this? What if you lived in those conditions, would you want others to go help you? What if you were to see Jesus, Himself, in one of those shanty houses? Would you then want to improve those people’s lives - even if it was difficult for you?”

That stopped them in their tracks and the quiet was so quiet it felt like they were suddenly floating in outer space. Fr. James reached deep inside his heart and spoke just barely above a whisper. “This plan comes from the Holy Spirit,” he said. “We are called to bring light and hope to the world. But there are some of you who do not believe.” His passion for this ministry ran through his very core. This was no sales pitch. This was no mere program or book study or fundraiser – all very easy to sign up for. This moved the blood in his veins and the air in his lungs. The inspiration came from the Lord during a Holy Hour of Adoration. As the months of prayer and discernment passed, it all just became more and more clear.

He knew from the beginning there would be ones who would not believe and at least one who would probably betray him spreading gossip saying, “The problem is too big. Who does he think he is? He’s only one man, and we are just ordinary people. What can we really do to fix it? Our plates are already filled with important things to do.”

As he stood there, Fr. James watched some of his flock continue out the door unable to look past their own neatly wrapped boxes of the meaning of life. They would return to their normal daily lives and probably no longer stay in his Parish.

Others were still standing, unsure if they could give so much of themselves, but at the same time unsure if they could just walk away. A few returned to their seats. Fr. James then said to those remaining, “Do you also want to leave?” Stewart spoke on behalf of all present, “Father, where else should we go? You have a plan for us to truly serve and bring others to Eternal Life. We have come to believe and are convinced this plan is a Holy work of God.”

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