



WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

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How many remember Two Guys? How about Rickel? When I first came to St. Mary's, the only big store around, which has also gone the way of other department stores, was Caldor. That's just a fact of life. Stores come and go, even though they all basically sell the same stuff!

More than taking a walk down memory lane, I wanted to use the example of a well-known store to make a point. I didn't want to get in trouble by mentioning one over another. So, to avoid that, I decided to pick one that is no longer in business! When I first arrived in St. Mary's, there was the current St. Mary's, and we also had the old Parish Center. That is now the Southern Ocean Resource Center. We used it for Mass on the weekend and for a variety of parish activities, including CCD, basketball, bingo, dances, dinners and the carnival. Back then, the question could be asked: "What is the difference between the Church and Caldor?" I suspect, and hope, that for you that is a silly question with an easy answer. The Church is a place of prayer, worship and faith, and Caldor is a store that sells stuff. Obviously, there is a huge difference and we can easily say there is no comparison.

I wish that were true for more people. Of course, there is a big difference between the two, in essence, but what about in practice? That's the real question, because, for many, practically speaking, there is little difference between the two. How can that be? Consider this: For many people, 1. they know where both are; 2. they are glad that they are there; 3. they only go when they need something; and 4. there's no commitment to either. In terms of Caldor, most don't work there; most don't own stock. In other words, they have no investment in the store. It is there simply to provide a service when needed.

Sadly, that describes many Catholics! They know where the Church is; they are glad that it's there; they will go when they need something; but there is no commitment, no investment. They do not really consider themselves to be a part of it. They are on the outside looking in. To me, this describes one of the great challenges we face in the Church today. There is a whole group of people who are not angry at the Church; they have not really rejected the teachings or the purpose of the Church; they admire the Church and believe it has an important place in society; but, in practice, they do not consider themselves an active participant. They are more spectator than disciple; they are more consumer than parishioner.

Here, in St. Mary's, we have many inspiring and spiritually uplifting events. Our faithful parishioners are nourished by them. However, some only come and leave with a good feeling, much like one would leave an enjoyable show - entertained but not changed. I don't know how to change that. Of course, I do know that ultimately it is the work of the Holy Spirit, but I would like to help! This time of the year is an opportunity for a restart. School has re-opened; our Religious Education program is starting again; we will have more programs of renewal including a parish mission in November. My fervent prayer is for revival.

I am glad for all the Caldors, past and present, especially when I need something. However, none of them can help me get to Heaven. Only the Church can do that. But, in order for that to happen, I think maybe we should do more than just check in every now and then!

"As a result of this, many of His disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied Him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, 'Do you also want to leave?' Simon Peter answered Him, 'Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'" (John 6:66-68)