

Notes from Grayson Warren Brown
Sunday, September 21, 2008

Grayson Warren Brown spoke at the Anglican Use Liturgy of the Word at St. Therese Little Flower Parish on Sunday, September 21, 2008.

He stated his hope that no one is converting to the Catholic Church because they are angry at Episcopalians or Anglicans, or to try to escape from conflict. He hoped instead that people are converting to the Catholic Church because they want to be better people, better equipped to search out the outcast and the lost, better able to serve others with compassion, more dedicated to working for justice.

He paid a tribute to his roots in the Episcopal Church and to the African American tradition of his home parish where they could make singing “A Mighty Fortress is our God” sound like gospel. He shared that his sister is an ordained deacon in the Episcopal Church.

He shared a story to illustrate that he hopes we will be able to avoid too much focus on the details of the liturgy and too little focus on the works of compassion. When he was twelve years and was serving at the altar for the first time, he made a mistake in moving the missal from the Epistle side of the Altar to the Gospel side. Afterwards so many people pointed out his mistake. But his pastor told him the thing a twelve-year old needed to hear – “You did a good job.”

At about sixteen years old he began playing organ for a Catholic parish and continued to be an Episcopalian for four years while working for them. After four years he joined the Catholic Church “because I wanted to eat with the people I was worshipping with. I didn’t become Catholic because of doctrine. These were the people who accepted me and loved me for who I am.”

He reminded his listeners that in the Gospel according to Luke, at the Last Judgment labels and liturgical minutiae will mean nothing. What matters is whether we turned away from Jesus as he came to us as the one who is sick, the one who is in prison, or whether we embraced him and cared for him. If we want to be the kind of Catholic who wants to get better at caring for Jesus, then the Church needs more like us.