

Most Catholics I know believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that Jesus is risen from the dead, and that Jesus is present in the Eucharist. They can believe the most mysterious and incomprehensible doctrines of our religion. What they cannot believe is that Msgr. James Comiskey is 79 years old. Or that he has served as a priest for 50 years.

During his life Monsignor attended eleven different schools -- not because they kept throwing him out, but because he soaked up education like a sponge. As priest he served 10 different parishes, not counting the three communities he has helped since he retired. He started a new parish in Amarillo, was a founding member of the Southwest Liturgical Conference, and served as director of Catholic Family Service in Amarillo. He's written two books. He holds four degrees. Two different cities in two different states claim to be his home. He works in Lubbock and he's related to half of Kansas City. He has preached thousands of homilies, some of them a little longer than others. In his retirement he's still working harder than the rest of us do. In 50 years he has seen the Catholic Church change a lot. How it has changed, I'm not completely sure, because I'm only 47.

But if you wanted to know what made the man tick, it was easy to find out. All you had to do was get a copy of his weekly bulletin and read his column. He called it "A View from My Window." Week after week Msgr. Comiskey sat at his window and observed the rest of the world go by. Then he wondered about it, got engaged in it, formed opinions about it, and made the world outside his window a better place. Throughout his ministry, Monsignor has been inviting us to look at the world through his window. We have seen marvelous things. We have seen the people of God at work and at prayer. We had to rethink some of our opinions because of how the world looked his way. The man we saw on paper was the man we saw in action: faithful to Christ, dedicated to priesthood, servant to the church, and just inquisitive about people, interested in learning everything about everything and everybody, helpless at the stove, but right at home at the table. He has shown us you're never too old to learn, never too old to listen, never too old to serve, to develop new friends, or to call on the old ones.

There's something else that Catholics believe. We believe that on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit entered the mouths of the apostles and they spoke in tongues that everyone could understand. We can believe that because for 50 years we have beheld the Holy Spirit entering the mouth of Msgr. Comiskey and speaking in tongues that we could understand. No matter what language we spoke -- old church, new church, smart Catholic, dumb Catholic, Missouri, Texas, family, friend, stranger -- no matter the language, the Holy Spirit spoke that language through Msgr. Comiskey, and we are better people for it.

Monsignor, here at St. Regis, because of you, we are stronger in our faith, happier in our service, and wiser in our views. We also feel younger whenever you're around. So on behalf of your family and friends, and the faithful who have benefited from your spirit of commitment, thank you. And congratulations!