

I ate the hole of it

A parishioner arrives in the sacristy almost daily with some donuts. Once a month, he arrives with a copy of a Coastal newspaper. The twelve page free newspaper called “Mississippi Gulf Coast Funny Pages” – a Make me Laugh Publications.

I really look forward to each copy and enjoy the funnies contained. A recent copy contained a prayer on the inside cover that got my attention. The prayer was as follows: “Dear Lord, so far today, am I doing all right? I have not gossiped, lost my temper, been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or self-indulgent. I have not whined, complained, cursed, or eaten any chocolate. I have charged nothing on my credit card. But I will be getting out of bed in a minute, and I think that I will really need your help then.”

The little prayer reminded me that God better have a sense of humor and that that such humor will see the joyful hope in the morning prayer.

Reading the “Funny Pages” I get my chuckles for the day and sometimes, some of them might find their way into conversations with friends or in a homily.

Now, what I do with the daily ration of donuts, is another story. Sometimes, I pawn them off on one of our permanent deacons. Other times, I enjoy one with my morning tea.

Sunday morning donuts is a different story. Families who facilitate our Sunday morning donuts and coffee at the parish are very much aware of my preferences and they act accordingly. They know I like the complete, hole-less donuts that are filled with all kinds of creams. They put one aside, wrapped in plastic wrap or in a napkin.

Kids, with Styrofoam cups of milk and white powdered faces enjoy their donuts. I often tell the adults to eat the hole first; that it doesn’t contain any calories. Older people just smile and say, “At my age, I don’t worry about calories. I worry more about being able to get out of bed in the morning.

After visiting with parishioners, I take my complete donut and enjoy the oozing cream that I wash down with a cup of tea.

As priests, we spend a lot of time listening to people’s journeys. We meet them in their joyful times of new beginnings and the sad times at their untimely departures. Like all humans, we need a touch of the lighter side of life to help put things in perspective. For me, it is often the slapstick comedy antics of the “Three Stooges” or “Laurel and Hardy.”

Maybe we have lost track of the jocularity of life and all its incongruities. Often well-known comedians had troubled childhoods and now they use humor to try and find a balance in their lives.

Maybe our church needs some balance too between the seriousness of life and the levity of life. How has this balance gotten out of sync? Firstly, we often perceive God as a stern judge watching and noting our every move and committing it to his big black book in the sky. Such a sole approach to God not only wipes a smile off a person’s face but swiped them into hell at the drop of a bad thought. Secondly, we often highlight the seriousness of sin and its consequences instead of balancing it with a merciful and forgiving God. We seem to emphasize more “thou shalt’s” than the invitation to “rejoice always.” Thirdly, there is the perception that the more serious you are, the more opportunities you have of progressing up the ranks of the church. I don’t take myself too seriously so I have no worries or ambitions in that area.

I often wonder, if heaven is supposed to be a place of happiness, a place of eternal joy and bliss, why are we so slow in allowing a taste of such to break through into our lives on earth? We all have had those moments of “heaven on earth.” Maybe we should allow more of them so that we might be in a better frame of mind to enjoy the happiness of heaven.

I just received my latest edition of the local free “Funny Pages.” I am going to disappear for a few minutes, brew myself a cup of tea and eat a hole donut while I enjoy some jocularity.