

Remember the Movie. "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade"? Great movie, great cast, wonderful sets and actors. It is also a very Catholic movie, at least in the last couple of scenes. Every great legend has seeds of truth. The telling of the legend reinforces those truths within the culture where the legend is told.

This movie is set around the search for the Holy Grail; a legend that we also find as a goal of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. With a little digging I'm sure we will find it in video games and dozens of other books, just wrapped and packaged a little differently, but the same basic legend.

In Indy's version, the Holy Grail is a cup that belonged to Joseph of Arimathea that was used to catch the blood of Christ when he was pierced with the lance after his Passion and Death. Drinking from this cup gives the gift of everlasting life to the one who drinks from it.

Sound familiar? After all in St. John's Gospel don't we read; "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. (Jn 6:54). Indiana is captured in the cavern where the Grail is kept and to force him to run the gauntlet to find it, the evil villain shoots his father. Then he reminds Indy of the power of the grail to save life and tasks him to ask himself what he believes.

Don't we have that same task every time we approach God, particularly in the Sacrament of the Eucharist? It is so easy to just go through the motions, pretend to be good Catholics, check the box now that everyone is looking and then go back to fussing about what someone said on Facebook. But if we truly believe that we have Jesus within us, what a change to the internal conversation.

Indy believes and now has to pass 3 obstacles in order to access the Holy Grail. The first is 'a penitent man shall pass'. Penance, something we should all practice, a gift that comes from the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and an attitude, a willingness to be humble before God, to get down on our knees to pray. Indy kneels and the blades pass over his head. We kneel for the Eucharistic Prayer and bow before God before we receive the Eucharist.

The next clue is that he must walk in the footsteps of God. Then he utters a great line, 'Proceed in the footsteps of the Word'. Remember the start of St John's Gospel? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with

God, and the Word was God.” (Jn 1:1) We are to walk with Christ, to be fed by the Word, to obey his law and to love him and each other. Indy has a much easier task in the movie. He just has to spell the Latinized version of the Proper name for God in Jewish Scripture, Jehovah while remembering that the letter J doesn’t exist in the Latin alphabet.

The third challenge of the gauntlet was the leap of faith. He had to step into the unknown, onto a path that he could not see. This isn’t only a leap of faith; it is a leap of love. He knows the grail will save his father’s life, but does he love his father enough to lose his own? Does he love as Christ loves us, who lost his life to save ours. As he steps, he doesn’t know a solid path is there. He expects to fall to his death, but hope drives him forward.

We have to make that same leap, usually in a less dramatic fashion every time we have our faith challenged by sin. Is our faith; our love of Christ strong enough to avoid the occasion of sin, or do we fail to take the leap and turn away from our quest?

Indy enters the chamber that holds the Holy Grail and he encounters a Knight who is kneeling in prayer over the Bible that he has been studying. Fearing that Indy is evil he tries to attack, but age and infirmity prevent him from being effective. Instead of lashing out, Indy helps the Knight up and treats him with dignity and respect. In return the Knight offers Indy his position as guardian of the Grail.

Here is this character who has spent hundreds of years in isolation with only his Bible and prayer to keep him company. How much time do we spend in prayer and reflection? How do we treat the elderly or infirm? Are we impatient and try to push past with a snide remark or do we treat them with the dignity and respect they deserve?

The villains enter and the Knight declares that the true grail brings life, but the false grail brings death. The bad guy asks the bad woman to chose for him and as the Knight said, “he chose poorly.” Indy ignores the woman to the point of pushing her away and chooses the most humble, poorest cup in the display. He chose wisely.

This exchange is more about the disposition of the person’s soul than about the cup. Receiving Jesus into our souls when we are not prepared by Reconciliation and our disposition at the moment is a grave and serious sin. The villain intended to use the Grail for himself; to gain power and wealth and he didn’t care who got hurt in the process. Indy wanted the cup to save his father’s life. It wasn’t about him. When we speak to Our Lord

once we have received him in the Eucharist, we should talk about ourselves, but we should also remember to speak about the other people who are in our hearts and minds and pray for them as well.

Indy's dad is healed of his wound by the water from the grail; we are healed by the Eucharist, it is the healing sacrament. His wound was from a bullet; our wounds are from sin. Indy and his dad healed and strengthened their relationship; we heal and strengthen our relationship with Jesus.

The Grail could not pass the great seal. In order for it to be valid and function it had to remain within the confines of the cavern. In order for the Eucharist to be valid, to be the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, it requires a Priest of the Catholic Church to consecrate the Eucharist. Outside the seal of the Church, without an Ordained Priest who can trace the lineage of the Bishop who raised him to the Order of Priest within the Sacrament of Holy Orders back to the Apostles, there is no Eucharist. Communion outside the Catholic Church is simply a symbolic meal.

Conversely, since the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith, without Priests, we don't have a Catholic Church. It wasn't an accident that the sacraments of the Eucharist and of Holy Orders were combined into one event by Our Lord.

The last villain tries to separate the Grail from its place of rest. She tries to control God and falls into darkness. Indy is tempted, but his father calls him back to his senses. Whenever we let our ego, our hubris get the better of us, we fall into the darkness of sin. But unlike in the woman in the movie, Jesus is always there to catch us and call us back to him, just as Indy's dad called out to him. All we have to do is listen to him.

So where is the Holy Grail? Right here on the Altar and on every altar in every Catholic Church and where ever the Mass is celebrated throughout the world.

Now I'm sure that you will never watch that movie the same way again. We also need to pray for and actively encourage vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life. We tend to avoid considering a life dedicated to God because of the sacrifices involved. We forget that married life is made up of sacrifice, single life lived as a Catholic is made up of sacrifice as well. The choice isn't between sacrifice and no sacrifice. The choice is in which sacrifices we are going to make.