

"Bibs or Aprons?"

9/16/2007

I was given an apron this morning at church. I preached and consecrated the new church facility for the St. Andrew United Methodist Church in West Lafayette, Indiana. That congregation has made a bold move to a new location, built a beautiful new facility, and celebrated a time of renewed vitality. As a part of that vitality, they have focused upon giving persons an apron (appropriately labeled with their congregation's name and motto) as a symbol of our call to service as Christian disciples. In particular, their senior pastor Tim Burchill indicated their desire to combat the usual consumer attitude of choosing a church "to feed me."

I like my new apron, and I especially like the reminder that we don't go to church just to be fed (that would mean we all wear bibs to church), but we go to church to learn how to feed and serve others (hence the apron). Certainly all of us have times when need to be fed, nourished, supported by prayer, and cared for. Church must be a place where all of us receive God's grace when we need it. But if we stop there – only asking, "What's in it for me?" – then we buy into the consumer mentality of our culture, and we make church into just another place where we shop for our favorite treatment and service. All of us know persons who seem to "church shop" and jump from church to church, often making the same complaint, "I wasn't fed there." Perhaps such persons need to learn to lengthen their bibs into aprons, and to learn how to live the life of service and discipleship to which Jesus calls us.

So, how about your church? Are you giving people bibs or aprons? And how about you? Are you looking for a spoon-fed faith and consumer religion which caters to your needs? Or are you seeking a life of love and service and sacrifice which might lead all the way to the Cross? Which will it be – bibs or aprons?

from Bishop Michael J. Coyner

<http://inumc.org/epistles/detail/43273>