

Column

The words “Come, grow with us” can be found on many church signs, often those in rural areas. Invariably, they bring a smile to my face. Let me explain why.

In many cases, next door to the church will be an open-air pavilion with long tables down the middle. Letting my imagination go, I can see those tables groaning with fried chicken, potato salad, Aunt Milly’s green bean casserole (don’t want miss that one) freshly sliced tomatoes and desserts too many to count.

The children are silenced in preparation for the blessing. Everyone secretly prays it won’t be given by old Brother Johnson who can pray a 25-pound turkey cold. Long or short, once it is finished, a woman with a flowered dress rushes through the waiting throng with a plate of devilled eggs and a pan of biscuits. Breathlessly she places them on the table. Dinner can now begin.

Before long the tables are surrounded by men and women, boys and girls, juggling paper plates and cups of iced tea. People laugh and talk as they attempt to take a little of everything, but the volume goes down as forks and knives descend in the direction of overflowing plates.

Before the meal is over an already portly gentleman groans and loosens his belt a notch. Growth occurs in a variety of ways, often in places we don’t want!

Nevertheless, the invitation “Come, grow with us” is a good one. It serves – or should serve – as a reminder that the church exists not just for those who are already members, but for those who pass by. Jesus is giving a party, and we’re all invited! Christians are His handwritten invitations.

But another type of growth is envisioned by this slogan as well. It is that of which the apostle Peter speaks when he writes: “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

Not all God’s children want to grow in girth, but all should want to grow in grace. This latter includes: growth in understanding of the Scriptures, growth in our ability to share our faith and growth in our capacity to translate the written precepts found in the Bible into real life.

“Come, grow with us” may make us smile, but it should also make us think.

“We beseech thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon thy people; that by thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Collect for Fifth Sunday in Lent, Book of Common Prayer)

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