

Season 3: *“IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CHRIST”*

Good Afternoon. My name is Ken Varnum. I have been asked to speak to you about the Arise Program. Carol and I have been married for 45 years. We have 4 children and 11 grandchildren. We have been members of St. Agatha parish for about 35 years.

If you asked some of the people who know me, they would probably tell you that I share jokes and good humor, easily, but, if you ask Carol, she would tell you what I don't share easily, are my thoughts or Feelings....I wonder how many of you men have heard that before.....So when the Arise program started, I wasn't rushing to participate in it.....BUT, shall I say, at the “Encouragement” of Carol, I signed up. And it didn't hurt a bit. Some couples like to join the same group ... in our case, Carol joined one group that worked for her and I found another group that worked for me. I knew 5 of the 12 people who were there, but It didn't take long before I felt I knew all twelve.

Our group was made up of 6 men and 6 women of different ages and backgrounds. We met on Wednesday morning at 10:00 which worked out well because some of us went to daily mass We met in a home for 90 minutes for six weeks. The Arise program is designed around a guide book with a weekly format of scripture, reflection, prayer, music, and sharing. We were encouraged to participate in the discussions but there was no pressure to do so.

I went to the first meeting with visions of being uncomfortable and having to listen to someone talk on something I wasn't interested in. As it turned out, I was very pleasantly surprised. When we arrived at the home, we were offered coffee and goodies ... which I thought was a great way to start. We were all made to feel very welcomed .

When we were to share our thoughts on a reading, I sat back and

listened to some of the others and before I knew it, I put in my two cents worth.

The next session, a week later, I was the first one to arrive. “Did I mention there was coffee and goodies?” Each week, I found it more interesting and got more out of each time we met than I ever thought I would. We not only got more familiar with the bible readings, we shared parts of our lives in discussions and became a small, close community. We didn't always agree with one another but that's O.K. There were many times when I would get a new insight into something just by listening to someone else's opinion.

I'm looking forward to this season, even without that, “encouragement” from Carol.

Here at St. Agatha, the Arise program has more than 20 groups with over 200 people participating. There are groups made up of teenagers, young adults, women only, men only and, like ours, men and women together. The choice is yours.

If I have sparked your curiosity about the Arise program, I hope you will at least consider signing up for the this season, called *In the Footsteps of Christ*.

As that old saying goes,

TRY IT. YOU MIGHT JUST LIKE IT.

DID I MENTION THAT WE HAD COFFEE AND GOODIES??

Thank you for listening.