***Donnie Osmond Will Not be Playing the Part of Joseph Tonight***

Years ago, I had the privilege of playing the part of Joseph in the Musical, “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat” in a Church Production. It was a great honor and I still hum the tunes from time to time. Years later former parishioners wanted to take us to see the Production in Chicago that was “on the road” starring Donnie Osmond. It was terribly difficult to get the tickets, but by God’s grace, the tickets were bought and we were ready to go. The parishioners were especially excited and made extra plans to enhance the experience of going to the performance. Dinner, a limousine — it was A+. When we arrived, at the Theatre in Chicago, we were greeted by the Concierge. Then we saw a somewhat nondescript sign on the door. “Donnie Osmond will not be playing the part of Joseph tonight. Joseph will be played by ” Well, it was his understudy.

Now, of course, the question was “How should we respond?” All of this trouble simply to see and hear an understudy! I mean, after all, didn’t the Theatre and the Musical understand that we were there that night and that we had to go through a great deal of trouble and money in order to see an understudy?

Over the years I have had an opportunity to ponder that night. The food was good. The friends were wonderful. In the past, I had ridden in a limousine with some regularity, and the Funeral Director was usually a very good driver! The ride was pleasant and the night was fun. But it was not Donnie Osmond. I have also wondered what it was like for the understudy when he called his family that day and said, “Guess what! I’m in Chicago. Donnie is sick and I get to play Joseph!” Can you imagine how excited his family must have been? Can we even imagine how many people the proud parents called that day?

On June 2, 1925 the “First string” First Baseman for the New York Yankees could not play that day. His name was Wally Pipp and he was greatly respected. A newcomer named **Lou Gehrig** played that day and then went on to play 2,130 games in that position. Very few people sit around and tell their favorite Wally Pipp stories these days. The understudy did very well, and the only thing that eventually took him out of the lineup was the disease that would kill him — still to this day — ALS — is called “Lou Gehrig’s Disease.”

How often today, I will turn on the television set and skim through the stations noting how many televangelists there are. A big Pulpit with a big Choir, and I wonder what people would say if they heard that Pastor Jones was not teaching and preaching tonight. The lights, the camera, the action are all on him. We have a very odd tendency to create “personalities,” “influencers,” and “media heroes” these days. Instead of simply doing what they set out to do — what they were called to do, a cult begins to surround them: It’s a little bit like the song in “Grease” “Tell me more, tell me more.” We want more than the news. We want to know all about the newscaster.

Fortunately, we are a part of a Tradition where we require a validly ordained priest standing at the Altar — oftentimes not even looking at us, as the Bread and the Wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. The priest does all that he can not to draw attention to himself, and when we go to the Altar Rail to receive the Blessed Sacrament, we are less concerned about who hands us the Sacrament than we are with Whom we receive.

In the 1920’s people went to see the Yankees play baseball. There are nine men on the field. It’s about baseball. And when we went to see “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat” we went to hear the music and to focus on the message of God’s redemption as a brother was sold into slavery in Egypt and wound up saving his father and brothers from starvation. Yes, there is more to the Biblical Story and the Musical than Donnie Osmond playing the lead. Baseball players come and go. Entertainers come and go. TV personalities come and go and Clergy come and go. **But Jesus is still the Star and every single day he has the Lead!**