

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

We are having a second collection after communion today for the hurricane Harvey relief efforts. The US Bishops put out this request earlier this week so since it is such late notice we will also have a collection basket out by the doors next week for you to make your donation.

There have been some incredible stories and scenes coming out of this epic tragedy. Most of them are how people of all colors and creeds are coming together to help other people. Black men are rescuing white children. White men are rescuing black women. Businesses opening up their doors to feed or house both the rescued and the rescuers. Everyone is helping everyone regardless of race, color or legal status. I don't know if it was fake news but one story showed the Mexican army coming to help.

It's quite a contrast to what happened a few weeks ago in Charlottesville. It's a comparison of man's law vs Divine law. World views vs Gods desire. It's not that hard to tell the difference between whether it's God at work or something or someone else. People in the news media and social media can over react because of emotions or over report a story to increase ratings. Then it causes us to do the same. People sometimes forget what they say or do can either leave a legacy of hope or a legacy of hurt. And Both can be lasting.

Joel Osteen the pastor of a huge megachurch in Houston was getting criticized for always preaching his Prosperity gospel but didn't open his church to help people. After a lot of videos and comments, calling him hypocrite and bashing him for his lack of response we learned that their members actually were working with city officials in other shelters because their church location which was prone to flooding had actually taken in considerable amount of water in the lower levels, but that wasn't visible from the street.

The legacies we leave behind will be based on what people first see. Not always based in fact. If our legacy is based on our over reactions, half-truths or fake news then that's what we leave behind. But if our legacy is for a higher purpose, for standing up for truth and helping others, then we leave a legacy for a greater good.

Many years ago Mrs. Morris left a legacy for this parish. I didn't know her but I suspect she was someone who lived a well ordered life and even planned how to give back even after her death. In her estate she left the church in her will. It was earmarked for physical church maintenance and improvements. I guess she could tell even back then that this green carpet would eventually fade and fray, that the walls behind the altar would be needing to be repaired and painted, the pews would wear out, the sound system would become obsolete, the lighting inadequate and that this popcorn ceiling would just become, disgusting. So thanks to her legacy we are able to start addressing those things this fall. If you want to contribute to help make these improvements to this sacred place, then use your envelopes that say building fund on them. So you don't have to wait until you get to heaven to leave your mark on the parish.

I know that many of you are very mindful of the budget that it takes for a church and school this size to operate and provide the many good ministries and programs that this parish offers. Thank you for your generosity and gifts. We came in right on budget this year and I'm very grateful to our staff and faculty for being such diligent stewards of our resources.

Recently we had a family that just gave the parish two large gifts. One was a gift to go towards the needs of the parish in general but the other one was designated specifically for the Discipleship Program that has impacted their family in such a wonderful way. What a blessing these legacies are making.

When we say that we are a parish Building, Bridging, and Being we mean both physically and spiritually.

One of the areas that we continue to build this year is the discipleship program, which really isn't a program at all. It's a way of living with purpose and joy that Jesus calls each of us to reform our minds to. We will hear more about that in the coming weeks.

But how do we know if we are already disciples or not? How do I know what my legacy will be?

On Catholic radio they were talking about a St. Paul street ministry which teaches Catholics of all things, how to go out into the streets and evangelize people! That may be new and it may not be for you but it may be just the thing for some of you. The Archdiocese has an active prison ministry that I think some of you may be called to, but that's not for everyone.

Each of us have a legacy to leave but we first have to know if it's Gods desire for us or if it's our own desire for ourselves. How did this work for the disciples? When Jesus was talking to his disciples, he told them specifically about how he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised.

None of that was on anyone's checklist for the new King of Jerusalem. I wonder if Peter even heard Jesus say on the third day be raised again. It was a curse to be crucified and that just wouldn't be possible for the Messiah. It couldn't happen. But it was going to. Peter didn't get it. Peters 'legacy is: Open mouth, insert foot. He's all reaction and passion. Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, "God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you." How does Jesus deal with Peter? He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." Fortunately, that's not Peters only legacy. He learns eventually to temper his reactionary outbursts like we all must, as St. Paul urges.

Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. Ok. Well said. But what is a renewal of the mind? If that is what is necessary to know the difference between my will and Gods how does the mind become renewed? Anyone can leave a financial legacy but how do I leave a legacy of Faith? How do I do Gods will instead of my own? To be a disciple servant of Gods mind?

There is a Poem by Francis Thompson called
The Hound of Heaven
That shares the secret of how to allow our mind to be renewed.
We have to let ourselves be caught by God.

In the Hound of Heaven, the author writes:

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up visited slopes I sped;
And ran from those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
Rise, clasp My hand, and come! I am He Whom thou sleekest!

To let our mind to be renewed we have to let ourselves be caught by the Hound of Heaven, our God who wants us to surrender our will to His. Jeremiah calls it being duped by God but it really means being seduced.

Because no matter what, Jeremiah can't stop talking about the Lord. He finds himself so completely loved and in love with God, that no matter the consequences, no matter what people say about him or to him, he won't stop sharing God with others.

That is his legacy. And we are still inspired by it today because he let himself be caught by the Lord. So the legacy that I leave behind all depends, on what I'm running from and on what I let catch me.