

From the Pastor – February 2020

Dear Holy Spirit Family,

As I write this note we are exactly one month past Christmas Eve. In that short time much has returned to “normal.” For the most part Christmas trees and lights have come down. The shops have turned their attention to Valentine’s Day and Easter candy. Even the Church’s seasonal color has returned to green, reminding us that we are in the midst of - what our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters call - “Ordinary Time”.



We experience this return to that normal, ordinary time in more subtle ways, as well. The joy, and cheer, and bright faces of those we pass on the street and in the shops are a little less bright today. The attention that we gave to spending time with family and friends is replaced with busyness and “getting back into our routines.” And the divisiveness in our country that might have been somewhat muted during the Christmas break is, only a short time later, back in full force. Nothing seems to have changed.

Bishop Reed recently reminded a group of us that, in a deeply divided society, we Christians are called into the hard work of being a loving, forgiving, and reconciling people. I was struck by the phrase “hard work,” not because it was a surprise, but because it is so true. We are not called to stand by and simply choose not to contribute to the divisiveness (though that is a good start), but to be actively engaged in that very difficult work of engaging the other as one who also has the capacity to bear the image of God. As our baptismal covenant puts it, we promise to “respect the dignity of every human being.”

Since I was a teenager my family has loved the movie *Christmas Vacation*, and it was a tradition to watch it every year sometime during the season leading up to Christmas. The many “one-liners” have made it into my family’s vocabulary, and there is hardly a gathering where someone doesn’t make a reference to that movie.

Perhaps one of the best comes toward the end of the movie. Clark, the father of the family, has been waiting for several days for his Christmas bonus check to arrive. The tension builds as he waits because he has already spent the money on a deposit for a swimming pool. Days pass, but when the courier finally does arrive, Clark opens the envelope to find not a check, but that his Christmas bonus is a gift subscription to the Jelly of the Month Club. Not fully understanding Clark’s bewilderment, the slightly deranged, but good-hearted cousin Eddie remarks, “Clark, that’s the gift that keeps on giving!”

Without making light of it, perhaps Eddie has the right idea. The Incarnation, God’s greatest gift to us, is the gift that keeps on giving. It would be easy to make Christmas something that comes around every year, and for a brief moment we catch a glimpse of God working to reconcile all people. Or it could be “the gift that keeps on giving” calling us into living out the hard work, even when that is not being returned by others.

Let’s not settle for normal; *everything* has changed!

Faithfully,

Chris +