

THE PASTOR'S POST

BACKPACKS

Dear Parish Family:

When I was a kid, I always wanted a backpack. All my friends at Our Lady of Lourdes in West Islip had them and I wanted one too. My dad always said no. He warned me that it's not good for my posture and I'd be better off if you don't have one.

I guess, at some point, I wore him down. I cannot remember if my mom was an ally in this endeavor.

I have used backpacks since those early days at the Catholic School in West Islip to this day. Now, I have two!

My dad was right. The proof is how I walk and how I stand today. I have terrible posture. The wear and tear and the weight of using a backpack has taken a toll.

Re-read the Gospel today. A sack is one of the things Jesus forbids for the journey of the disciple, along with food and money. I wonder if there might be a few reasons that relate to our lives today.

First, there is a need to let go of some things. An example comes to mind. I work with a young person who just started in high school in this country. Because of his own history and background, he held on to every paper he received this school year. I mean **every paper!** The backpack was huge and heavy. He was holding on to too much from the past year. He was afraid to let go of some things for fear he might lose a paper or someone might take something that belonged to him.

This is true for us in our own lives today, right? Maybe it is papers, maybe it is clutter in our homes or offices or rooms or some junk that needs to go or maybe it is something much deeper? What are we holding on to from the past that is holding us back from going forth? It might be a sin of our past, a broken relationship, a former "life" (career, role, physical abilities, etc.) we miss. We are

never going to be able to go forward, to go out, if we're looking back and holding on to all of these things from the past. Take some time this week, what are some things from your past (and I'll look at mine) that we can pray to be liberated from.

Second, these backpacks get heavy. The weight of these backpacks obviously weighs us down. Go back to the posture struggles from above. We are carrying a lot. It might be those things from the past, sure. It also might be some of the present weights we carry. Some of us are worried about our behaviors and actions. Others are responsible for the health and well-being of another. We might be thinking of the struggles of our diocese and the Church. The struggle and tension in our own country is crushing. The reality of poverty, war, and violence throughout the world can make it heavier and heavier.

Here, again, is perhaps the reason Jesus told them no sack, don't carry anything. I sort of imagine Jesus saying, "I'm going to carry this with you and for you". Imagine him saying that to you about one of the things that weigh you down. I'm trying to do the same with a few things in my own life. I imagine him saying something like, "I'm going to hold this - (insert whatever it is for you) - so you can be free to go forth and carry out the mission I have set for you."

So what's holding you down? What are you holding on to? Jesus was pretty clear with the disciples about not holding on to a lot of things - physical and otherwise - for the journey. Maybe he's saying the same thing to you and me. If we can empty out a bit, if we can let go a bit, if we can surrender more fully, maybe we will be able to stand up straight and tall ready to respond to all that God is asking of you and of me.

Please pray for me and I promise the same.

Featherman