

# THE PASTOR'S POST

## TOTUS TUUS & AMDG

Dear Parish Family:

This is my second attempt at a bulletin column.

I wrote one this morning before attending a funeral. On my way home, something else emerged.



I concelebrated the funeral of Fr. Gerry Fitzsimmons, a Montfort Missionary. We, as a parish, have been connected to the Montfort Missionaries. The Montforts have been a presence here for many years. Fr. Nesly is a Montfort

Missionary. The group home where I volunteer is supported by the Montfort Missionaries. I knew Fr. Gerry, or "Fr. Fitz" as he was more commonly known, from a distance.

Fr. Fitz was a Montfort Missionary priest who spent his priesthood as an associate pastor, pastor, provincial/superior of his community, a mission preacher in parishes throughout the world, and spent a good part of the past 20 years of his life devoted to the protection of children and young people in putting systems in place in the Montfort community internationally. A member of the leadership of the Montfort Missionaries in Rome was sent to share the impact he had in this area.

A few years ago, Fr. Fitz was diagnosed with ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease. The disease progressed quite rapidly though he was able to celebrate Mass at Sacred Heart Chapel with the Sisters of St. Joseph regularly up to three weeks ago.

The preacher, Father Matthew, at his funeral spoke of the great preaching of Fr. Fitz. I remember him coming to my home parish when I was kid. He was a great preacher. Father Matthew today acknowledged the power of his

words and the care it took to preach them in these last months, often having to measure the length of sentences as his breathing became more labored.

He admitted, though, he did not realize the power of his preaching until the past year or two as he dealt with this brutal disease. For as his body died, Jesus rose more and more in him. He **is** a great preacher proven not by his words but by the way he lived and in the way he died.

*Totus Tuus* are the words of St. Louis de Montfort. Translated it means, "Totally yours". It is what he said to Mary confident that she would bring him closer to her Son. Saint John Paul II used this as his papal motto. It seems that Fr. Fitz was able to know the full meaning of those words. He knew Jesus' journey and his journey were never far apart. In the worship aid for the funeral, these words from Saint Louis de Montfort were included, "To know Jesus Christ, incarnate Wisdom, is to know all we need. To presume to know everything and not know him is to know nothing at all." Fr. Gerry appeared to know all he needed to know - Jesus Christ.

I left the liturgy saddened, to be honest. You could see that his loss was a devastating one to his religious community and the hundreds of lives he touched. I was saddened too because a realization of his life highlighted for me that I am not "totally yours" enough and have so much more to know about Jesus Christ in my heart, more than my head. A good challenge lies ahead.

I write this also mindful that a week from this writing we celebrate the feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola (July 31). A famous motto of his - which I believe I wrote about last year - *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*, translated *All for the Glory of God*. If we can only get this in our heads and hearts making sure that we are always connecting who we are and what we do to God's glory, never ours. Even





# EL POST DEL PARROCO

## TOTUS TUUS & AMDG

our sufferings and sacrifices, our agonies and afflictions can be for the glory of God.

Yet, I know this is difficult. We are so caught up in what we have to do and what we must get done. We see so many of these things as tasks and responsibilities and obligations. Indeed, they are! At the same time, they can and should be for the glory of God. If they're not, we should probably stop doing them.

As we gather this Sunday, we begin to pray with the Gospel of John and will do so for the next few Sundays. Our readings come from the sixth chapter which focuses on Jesus, the Bread of Life. This might be just what I need and maybe you, too. The weeks ahead call us to focus on our participation in the liturgy and the importance of the Eucharist in our lives. We have been working on this throughout the year from our teaching homilies in the Fall, to the small groups in Lent, to the return of the cup to the 40 hours devotion and the procession with more to come! The Eucharist becomes more and more an opportunity to be totally the Lord's and to go forth and to do all for the glory of God.

The communion hymn at the funeral Mass for Fr. Fitz was one we know - Center of My Life. The refrain begins, "O Lord you are the center of my life, I will always praise you, I will always serve you, I will always keep you in my sight." I have a feeling these words summarized Fr. Fitz's life in living and in dying. I hope and pray the same can be true for you and me one day.

Please pray for me! I promise the same.

*Our Lady of Wisdom, pray for us.*

*St. Louis de Montfort, pray for us.*

*St. Ignatius of Loyola, pray for us.*

*St. Brigid, pray for us.*

*All holy men and women, saints of God, pray for us!*

*Fatherhood*

Querida familia parroquial

Este es mi segundo intento de escribir una columna en el boletín.

Escribí una esta mañana antes de asistir a un funeral. De camino a casa, surgió algo más.

Concelebré el funeral del P. Gerry Fitzsimmons, un Misionero de Montfort. Nosotros, como parroquia, hemos estado vinculados a los Misioneros Montfortianos. Los Montfortianos han estado presentes aquí durante muchos años. El padre Nesly es misionero monfortiano. El hogar de acogida en el que trabajó como voluntaria está financiado por los misioneros monfortianos. Conocí de lejos al P. Gerry o "P. Fitz", como se le conocía más comúnmente.

El P. Fitz era un sacerdote de los Misioneros Montfortianos que pasó su sacerdocio como párroco asociado, párroco, provincial/superior de su comunidad, predicador misionero en parroquias de todo el mundo, y pasó buena parte de los últimos 20 años de su vida dedicado a la protección de niños y jóvenes poniendo en marcha sistemas en la comunidad Montfortiana a nivel internacional. Un miembro de la dirección de los Misioneros Montfortianos en Roma fue enviado para compartir el impacto que tuvo en esta área.

Hace unos años, al P. Fitz le diagnosticaron ALS o enfermedad de Lou Gehrig. La enfermedad progresó con bastante rapidez, aunque pudo celebrar misa en la Capilla del Sagrado Corazón con las Hermanas de San José con regularidad hasta hace tres semanas.

El predicador, Padre Mateo, Hablaba de la gran predicación del P. Fitz. Le recuerdo viniendo a mi parroquia cuando era niño. Era un gran predicador. El predicador de hoy reconoció el poder de sus palabras y el cuidado que ponía en predicarlas, a menudo teniendo que medir la longitud de las frases a medida que su respiración se hacía más dificultosa.