

# THE PASTOR'S POST

## TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

Dear Parish Family:

I have had some car issues of late. Nothing major. An annual inspection revealed the need for some significant - and costly - work. I have been fortunate to not have had too many issues over the past few years so it will be OK. Of course, right after I dropped off my car, I was called to help someone I look out for - nearly an hour away - and get back in time for our Prayer Service for Healing at 1:30 p.m. for National Migration Week. Thanks to Seminarian Nick for his generosity, transportation issue temporarily solved. I have been walking more over the past few days. It has been a little frustrating. It has taken me a little longer to get back and forth between the church and the school and forced me to curtail a few activities that I wanted to take part in. At the same time, I enjoy walking and it is helpful in my physical and spiritual life. I find that I try to talk to God about the people I have met during the day or the day prior. Other times, I try to talk through (not out loud) some of the challenges and struggles of the parish, of people I care for and, of course, some of my own. Sometimes, I feel like God and I are walking together. Other times, I think I might be walking alone not letting God walk with me.

"God walks with his people" is the theme for this year's World Day of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees. I think it is a good motto for each of us to remember in our own lives, especially our spiritual lives. We need to remember this, always. At times, on some of my walks, I stumble a bit. I think of the images in the Gospel. I am distracted by what I see and I trip. Other times, I might be holding on to too much causing me to lose balance. Sometimes there are obstacles in the way that slow me down or that I allow to take me off route. I'll even admit I have taken a phone call or responded to a text while walking. Some of the images might be literal - I am a klutz. More often, though, they are spiritual ones. On the outside I am walking in good form, but on the inside I may be missing the presence of God in the midst of it all.

Part of my walking this week brought me back and forth for the beautiful Prayer Services for Healing

sponsored by our Catholic school in the chapel and the church as we entered into National Migration Week. I could not help, in some very small way, imagine the journey that so many immigrants throughout the world make. There are dangers (many life-threatening) and distractions, many obstacles and weights, pains and the hope for new possibilities. As part of the prayer services, members of our school community who immigrated to this country or whose recent ancestors did so shared their stories - filled with obstacles and challenges, dreams and hopes, and some good humor too! They each spoke in some way about the importance of their faith and how it carried them through. They even knew God was walking with them - and perhaps -especially when the journey was most difficult.



At the prayer services, we read part of Pope Francis' message for the World Day of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees. He wrote, *"Many migrants experience God as their traveling companion, guide and anchor of salvation. They entrust themselves to him before setting out and seek him in times of need. In him, they find consolation in moments of discouragement. Thanks to him, there are good Samaritans along the way. In prayer, they confide their hopes to him. How many Bibles, copies of the Gospels, prayer books and rosaries accompany migrants on their journeys across deserts, rivers, seas and the borders of every continent! God not only walks with his people, but also within them."*

I think the topic of immigration can be one of those topics that trips us up in our spiritual and moral life. It is a very complicated issue and it is not as simple as "let everyone in" or "send everyone back". It is not as ignorant and prejudiced as accusing certain immigrant groups of activities because of their home country or the color of their skin. That's just plain wrong. In this country and countries throughout the world, immigration has a major impact and solutions are not easy. I think if, there was a good answer, we would have chosen it by now. It will require courageous leadership from government authorities, encouraged and challenged by advocates, especially the Catholic Church. (I encourage you to visit

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justiceforimmigrants.org to learn more about the Church's teaching about immigration. I think you might be surprised.)

One way to not get tripped up is to remember the last line of the passage from Pope Francis above: "God not only walks *with* his people, but also *within* them." I wish when we speak about immigrants and immigration reform (and any other issues that impact human life), we can remember that God is within them, whoever the "them" might be, even those who disagree with the Church's teaching about this issue. We so easily forget and resort to labels, slander, violence, hate, etc. forgetting God is within them. (Again this does not mean that difficult conversations and debates are not necessary!) How can we, as Catholics, forget the presence of God in the other?

For our mission as Catholics is to get each other to heaven, isn't it? Whenever we celebrate the Votive Mass for Refugees and Exiles, we pray, "grant that in sincerity of heart we may show true compassion toward strangers and the abandoned, and that all of us may deserve to be gathered together at last in the land of the living." This is the land of the living we should be helping one another to reach. Unfortunately, at times, we are having some transportation issues that need to be addressed starting first, within each of our hearts.

I just came back from the mechanic. I walked there and yes, even took a phone call. I stumbled more than once and walked right by a young parishioner and his dad who greeted me in Spanish - ¿Como estas, Padre Juan? See you in Church". I had to get my eyes off my phone to answer!

My practical transportation issues are addressed. My car is repaired and restored. My spiritual transportation issues - getting myself and others to their ultimate homeland - are still in need of repair. Maybe yours too?

Good news! We have the best spiritual mechanic - this God who walks with his people. Let us pray that we can let him walk with us so we walk in his ways, not our own.

Please pray for me. I promise the same.

*Father John*

Querida familia parroquial:

Últimamente he tenido algunos problemas con el coche. Nada importante. La inspección anual reveló la necesidad de una reparación importante y costosa. He tenido la suerte de no haber tenido muchos problemas en los últimos años, así que todo irá bien. Por supuesto, justo después de dejar mi coche, me llamaron para ayudar a alguien a quien cuido - a casi una hora de distancia - y volver a tiempo para nuestro Servicio de Oración por la Sanación a las 1:30 de la tarde para la Semana Nacional de la Migración. Gracias al seminarista Nick por su generosidad. Problema de transporte temporalmente resuelto.

He estado caminando más en los últimos días. Ha sido un poco frustrante. Me ha llevado un poco más de tiempo ir y venir entre la iglesia y la escuela y me ha obligado a reducir algunas actividades en las que quería participar. Al mismo tiempo, me gusta caminar y me ayuda en mi vida física y espiritual. Intento hablar con Dios sobre las personas que he conocido durante el día o el día anterior. Otras veces, intento hablar (no en voz alta) de algunos de los retos y luchas de la parroquia, de las personas a las que cuido y, por supuesto, de algunos de los míos propios. A veces, siento que Dios y yo caminamos juntos. Otras veces, pienso que estoy caminando solo, sin permitir que Dios camine conmigo...

«Dios camina con su pueblo» es el lema de la Jornada Mundial de Oración por los Emigrantes y los Refugiados de este año. Creo que es un buen lema para que cada uno de nosotros lo recuerde en su propia vida, especialmente en su vida espiritual. Necesitamos recordarlo siempre. A veces, en algunos de mis paseos, tropiezo un poco. Pienso en las imágenes del Evangelio. Me distraigo con lo que veo y tropiezo. Otras veces, me aferro demasiado y pierdo el equilibrio. A veces hay obstáculos en el camino que me frenan o que permito que me saquen de la ruta. Incluso admito que he contestado a una llamada o a un mensaje de texto mientras caminaba. Algunas de las imágenes pueden ser literales: soy un torpe. Pero más a menudo son espirituales. Por fuera estoy caminando en buena forma, pero por dentro puede que me esté perdiendo la presencia de Dios en medio de todo.

Parte de mi caminata de esta semana me