

# THE PASTOR'S POST

## VISITS

Dear Parish Family:

I am writing this on Monday - the bulletin deadline is earlier and shockingly I have already missed it! God bless the patience of our bulletin editor and the bulletin company. Part of the - not the only - reason I am running late is because today has been a day of visitations. I should have known when I started to prepare a homily for this upcoming Sunday.

This morning, I visited Mary (not her real name) in a hospital in Suffolk County. She is a woman of great faith and knows the struggle of living it out. I met her in one of my first parishes. Her son had just died of an overdose, she was battling cancer, and her family was falling apart. Yet, she fought...with God! She was in the wrestling ring with him, not giving up but also not afraid to speak up about what was bothering her. As she journeyed she started to become involved in the life of the parish there and started a powerful outreach initiative. The years since have not been easy. Her husband passed away a few years ago and her cancer diagnosis has returned in force. The realities of medicine forced her to sell her home and live with her daughter. Her family has rallied around her and she has rallied around them. And she knows God is with her even if is not quite sure of God's plan.



This afternoon, we prayed with the middle school students in our incredible Catholic school.

Throughout the season of Advent, we have been working to focus on different moments and

experiences of prayer, including the celebration of the sacraments. Today, we gathered for Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, a time of communal prayer before the Real Presence of Jesus. As it always is with our students, it was a powerful moment of prayer as nearly 80 people were spread throughout Our Lady's Chapel in this moment of prayer. A beautiful visit indeed!

I am finally getting back to my laptop after the beginning of Las Posadas - "The Inns". This tradition of our Hispanic community involves the journey of Mary and Joseph to various "inns", homes in the community trying to find a place to stay. At St. Brigid's, of course, we have to have three Las Posadas because of the size

of the crowds. For the past three years, Las Posadas has started at the rectory, or the parish house. What a privilege for us to welcome the presence, spirit, and faith of so many. There is a beautiful prayer with music and then a feast. Msgr. Vlaun, Fr. Andres, and Seminarian Nick took care of a great dinner (for nearly 150 people) and snacks (Smores!) for the kids. What a night of visitation.



The Gospel the Church gives us today recalls a moment in time - the journey of Mary to visit her cousin Elizabeth. I imagine it being a time of deep conversation, a spiritual encounter, and a wonderful celebration, sort of like my day today (I'm not sure there were raviolis and meatballs but if our Las Posadas cooking crew was there they may have been!). I bet you and I are having these sacred encounters more than we realize. It does not require a hospital, a chapel, a large meal or a big prayer. You and I are having many visitations, many sacred encounters. I hope this Advent has helped us to see this more.

We are about to enter into Christmas and these days are likely to be filled with many events, activities, feelings, emotions, and moments. Take some time to pay attention to the sacred encounters that are happening each moment. It may be celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation on Monday or making a visit to a quiet church. It might be your presence at one of our Christmas liturgies. It might be an engagement in our outreach efforts...or it could be as simple as a conversation with a distant relative, a chance meeting as you are walking along, an encounter with nature, a nice conversation at the cash register while catching up on last minute details or who knows what God has in store. I find I am more aware, though, when I am taking time to for those sacred encounters with God in prayer. Start there in these days and watch the many ways you are better able to see all that God has given you to see and to encounter.

Please pray for me...and say a prayer for my friend too. I promise the same.

*Featherman*