

# THE PASTOR'S POST

## FIRE AND ICE

Dear Parish Family:

I write today in the early part of the week. We are in the days of the Novena to the Holy Spirit. This past week, the diocesan Eucharistic pilgrimage came to St. Brigid's and to St. Brigid/Our Lady of Hope Catholic School. We gather this weekend to celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost! Signs - in the best way to use this word - that the Church is alive, that the Church is on fire, particularly here at St. Brigid's. There are so many signs of blessing in these days.

I also write in the midst of times of some great struggle and concern in our community. Our parish is overwhelmed by the increasing needs of those who come to our doors, particularly to Parish Outreach. We are struggling to make ends meet. We are attempting to meet the needs of so many as the Gospel impels us.

Our hearts are on fire here but we do find ourselves, at times, in the midst of a certain coldness, an icy resistance especially about "them", whoever the them can be. Why bother with the poor? They should help themselves. If they don't have insurance, it's their problem they can't get medical help! If they don't speak our language, they should go somewhere else. I don't care why they came, they should go back. This generation has no values. They should go somewhere else, not here. They're all criminals and murderers. Who needs them?

When it is a "they" or a "them" it is pretty easy to be like ice. The heart is not involved. The them is distant, far away, not close to the heart because we choose this. In many ways it is easier.

This is on my mind and my heart today. As you may have heard there have been some encounters with ICE and other government organizations in this area. For many of our brothers and sisters (not a them) it has been a time of great loss, fear, and intimidation. In speaking with some who have been impacted and reading some of the posts on official websites, it is cold. We have lost our heart, our passion for one another.

I consider the stories I have heard in this parish of immigrants in my nearly three years here. Throughout our history - from so many different lands - so many have risked so much to escape poverty, violence, abuse, oppression and the like - for the hope of something better, especially for their children and families. Whether from Ireland or Italy, El Salvador or Europe. Asia or South America, their journey was never easy, always filled with adversity in some way or another.

In the first reading today, even though people were from different lands and spoke different languages, even though they had different beliefs and different backgrounds, they understood the same language. For Catholics, the same is true for us. It is the language of love. Love can't be cold. It comes from the heart. This is why we need to celebrate Pentecost.

I know there are many opinions regarding how we should face difficult issues like immigration, hunger, and homelessness. But as people set on fire by the Holy Spirit, inspired by the gift of God's love, being cold is not an option. See another person as simply as part of "them" is not permitted. Pope Francis, in one his last letters reminded us, "Jesus Christ, loving everyone with a universal love, educates us in the permanent recognition of the dignity of every human being, without exception. In fact, when we speak of 'infinite and transcendent dignity,' we wish to emphasize that the most decisive value possessed by the human person surpasses and sustains every other juridical consideration that can be made to regulate life in society."

Let us not forget, as St. Paul tells us, "we're all given to drink of the same Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Let's pray that our hearts are set on fire for our brothers and sisters, especially the poor and the vulnerable in these times.

Please pray for me. I promise the same.

*Father John*

