

THE PASTOR'S POST

THE EQUATION OF HOPE

Dear Parish Family:

I find the second reading today from the Letter of Saint Paul the Romans filled with a lot of material for my own prayer and reflection. It has four of the most important words in the Bible, "Hope does not disappoint" (Roman 5:5). It reminds us that the love of God is poured (some translations say, infused) into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. That alone is worthy of a time of prayer and reflection. It is a reading that is sometimes chosen for funerals and has been recommended to me for prayer and reflection by more than a few!

Today, I'm drawn to another part of the passage, particularly in light of where we find ourselves as a parish, community and country these days. Saint Paul tells us that "affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope" (Romans 5:3-4). It is only after this that Saint Paul writes, "hope does not disappoint". So affliction + endurance + proven character = hope. This week presents an opportunity to determine if we have the parts of the equation to get to the sum. (Did I mention I love Math?)

Let me share two places for our consideration and reflection. First, to follow up on my writing from last week, each one of us must question our own character in light of the recent immigration developments in our country and in our local area. This past Tuesday, I gathered outside a local elementary school with local school leaders as ICE agents drove around the school repeatedly for a number of hours. As I wrote last week, there are increasing numbers of these appearances. Students were terrified. Parents were terrified. Teachers and leaders were trying to do everything they could to protect those entrusted to their care. I am glad we could support them in supporting some of our youngest learners (below sixth grade!).

Is this who we are? Supporting this kind of intimidation (and this is one just one example)? Is this who we are as Catholics, as disciples? Is this our "proven character"? If it is, we have no hope. While I acknowledge the issue of immigration and how to handle those who have come to this country outside of the legal ways (which were frequently impossible to navigate) is extraordinarily difficult, are these present ways the best ways to respect the life and dignity of our

brothers and sisters as the Gospel impels us to do? If it is, God help us.



In contrast to this situation which took place on the same day I consider how we celebrated the wake and the funeral for Paolo Michelotto, a student in our Pre-Kindergarten program at our incredible Catholic school who died suddenly last week. From the second this community learned of Paolo's passing, the character of this parish, school, and local community shone through as we walked with a family who faced impossible affliction. The community has helped, is helping, and will help them to endure, showing proven character. Well, then, there is reason to hope.

I think I am beginning to understand the wisdom of using this reading for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. This equation for hope may only work in the midst of community. The Trinity is a community of persons - Father, Son, and Spirit. Saint Paul tells us that the peace of God comes through Jesus and the love of God through the Spirit. This equation can't work outside the condition of community.

I suppose that is why one of the situations seems so hopeless. While the other, though devastating, was filled with hope. The presence of the community - of individuals from various walks of parish, school, and community life - allows us to have a hope that never disappoints. When we are divided, when we are pulled apart, at times even led to places of hate and division, never about us as one, but us as in those who share my _____ (language, political perspective, skin color, immigration status, age, gender, church perspective, etc.). This is not the unity that Jesus prayed for when he prayed we all might be one.

So can you get to hope? Do you have the parts of the equation? Let's pray this week for ourselves to fill in the missing part and in a spirit of mercy and compassion pray for others who have those missing parts, too. Then, together, we can come to the hope that does not disappoint.

Please say a prayer for me and please remember Paolo's family this week.

Feather