

THE PASTOR'S POST

NEIGHBORS

Dear Parish Family:

Last Friday, the 4th of July, was my sister's birthday so we had a small family party at my Mom's house. As usual, we reminisced about the past. My mom and dad were quite the party hosts so there were gatherings for many and any occasion - birthdays, anniversaries, holiday, dog's first birthday, christening of a new bathroom (seriously), etc. Really, anything for a party. If you have met my mom or knew my dad, you'd understand. One of the things I remember as a kid is that the neighbors were always at the parties - the Friedman's, the Cook's, the Sowa's, the Liccardi's, the Thompson's, the Stephani's and so on. We spoke about all of them at our 4th of July/Birthday Party this year. Simply, they were just part of the family. Of course, they would be at the party.

"And who is my neighbor?" the scholar asks.

It's a question set to cause controversy and undoubtedly the parable Jesus offers sets the crowd off. It's not about religious background. It's not about status. It's not about knowledge of the other. It is not about the gravity of injury. It's about mercy. Mercy triumphs over everything else. If our God is a god of mercy, how can we not be the same with one another.

I think in many areas we have lost the sense of the neighborhood and the impact of good neighbors. There are many theories and reasons for this. Often even if we live close to each other, in nearby apartments, or in rooms in the same house, we are simply local homeowners, tenants in the same building, renters in the same house. Not really neighbors. We often don't even know each other's names, not to mention the story that may bring us to a certain time and place.

So, who is your neighbor? Take some time on a personal level to consider this, using Jesus' criteria. Who have you offered mercy too? Who has been merciful to you? If you don't have an answer to both of these questions, you might be a problem neighbor :)! Get to work this week, taking a chance that by opening yourself up to another, you are offering the opportunity for the transmission of mercy, for the beginning of a good neighbor relationship.

Of course this is not just a micro-level issue. We have a world, country, church, and at times,



community neighbor issues. Using Jesus' criteria, we are failing to show mercy to one another. Countries are at war. We are facing times of great division in this country. The Church is not exempt from this. By the way some behave, post, act, and live, it's not clear we understand the message of the Good Samaritan.

In our local community, these days, we are called to reflect deeply on this, particularly when it comes to our brothers and sisters who are immigrants, regardless of when or how they immigrated. We are a church of "neighbors without borders" when it comes to showing compassion, mercy, understanding, aid, and love. No exceptions. No documents needed. No legal status required. Period. (I'm not speaking of this from a legal perspective but from a Gospel one.)

With this in mind, I hope you can participate in some of the activities we are working on these days, especially NEXT SUNDAY. We will have a pilgrimage of hope in this Jubilee of Hope, from the Parish Outreach Office on Post Avenue to the corner of Prospect Avenue and Brook Street (the site of one of our earliest outreach efforts). Here we will gather for the "feast meant for everyone" as we celebrate the Eucharist at 12:30 p.m. (approximately). I hope you can make time to be part of both events. Our participation is not a statement about our opinion regarding the immigration system. We are called to pilgrimage because we are making a statement about walking together as good neighbors, responding to the call to be merciful to one another. We are pilgrims next Sunday because we know, like the Good Samaritan, we must "go and do likewise" for our brothers and sisters who live in fear, are treated as objects, wrongly accused, spoken of in horrific terms, and struggling to find peace in their lives.

So let us commit to being good neighbors, neighbors without any boundaries.

Please pray for me in these days, I promise the same.

Feather

P.S. Can I suggest maybe this week it is a good idea to read Fratelli Tutti (Brothers and Sisters All) Pope Francis' encyclical about brotherhood. If you can, read at least Chapter 2 about the Good Samaritan.

