

THE PASTOR'S POST

THE SCHOOL OF THE CROSS

dear Parish Family:

Tonight, as I write this letter, we are getting ready for Back to School Night in our incredible school. I am sure it'll be a great opportunity to share with parents both the expectations and the exciting things that are happening. As a teacher, I always found Back to School Night to be an engaging encounter for parents and teachers. I'm sure the same will be true tonight.

This week at Mass we take a break from the Sundays in Ordinary Time for the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. It is a feast that is always celebrated on the fourteenth of September so it does not always happen on a Sunday. (My first parish as a priest was the parish of the Holy Cross so I have a special connection to this feast.) Today, the Church invites us to understand the significance of THE cross but also how the crosses of our lives link THE cross.

So what does the liturgy teach us today? The readings and prayers teach us about the power of the Cross. While a pole with an image was an instrument of healing of a practical condition in the Old Testament, the cross of Jesus Christ provides a much more profound healing, one that extends far beyond this world but opens us up to eternal life. For this, as the Gospel reminds us, is the source of the presence of God in the world - not to condemn, but to offer compassion, not to judge but save.

So how does this impact our everyday life? First, this week perhaps we are being called to not take the cross for granted. This is true for many of us, no? How many of us wear a cross without really considering the impact of what we are wearing? How many of us have crosses in our homes and we walk on by having become too comfortable missing or forgetting the significance of the cross in our lives.

I think the second part of the school of the cross for us is allowing the cross to impact how we live life. I

wonder if we forget this part most quickly. The truth is that each of us carry a number of crosses in our lives. Some heavier than others, some uglier than others. Pretty quickly we can be weighed down by the cross of loneliness or illness, the cross of sin, the cross of some of the people on our path or even the cross of hate and violence so many face in these times and moments.



Today's feast calls us to turn to the cross while we carry our crosses. We turn because yes we know the pain of the cross. Absolutely. Yet, our belief in this Holy Cross reminds us that we can come through the most difficult moments of our lives, even the seemingly impossible. How quickly we can lose our vision of the cross and what it ultimately means for us. It reminds us who can "forget the works of the Lord" to remember that God is always seeking to save his people, especially, you and me.

Today, as I write this, has been a day of facing some crosses for myself, those I minister with, those we're called to serve, and our nation and world. The weight that so many families are carrying is overwhelming. The financial realities of our parish and the decisions they are requiring here is significant. There was just another shooting in Utah and war is raging and expanding. If we believe in the cross, if we believe in this Holy Cross, then we can continue to walk together with our crosses as Jesus did with his, confident that just as his cross led to resurrection, our crosses, no matter how heavy they are, can lead us to new life.

Think of one of the crosses weighing you down today. It might, in some way, be the instrument that allows you and me to encounter God's all-embracing love in a new and radical way. Indeed, it can be a tough but life giving lesson to learn.

Please pray for me. I promise the same.

Featherman