

THE PASTOR'S POST

CALLED TO HOPE IN SILENCE

Dear Parish Family:

This Advent, in our incredible Catholic School, we are focusing around the theme "Called to Hope". It links to the Jubilee of Hope and our need to raise awareness of the many ways we are being called to serve God, particularly as priests and deacons. Each week of Advent, we are focusing on a different saint whose feast day falls in the week. During the first week we prayed with St. Francis Xavier, linking to his feast day on December 3rd. This past week, we prayed in a particular way with Mary celebrating Mass on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, not to mention the celebrations of St. Juan Diego and Our Lady of Loreto.

This upcoming week, we are going to pray together about the life of St. John of the Cross. This mystic of the Church found places of great corruption and despair in the Church and sought to reform it. Encouraging a powerfully contemplative approach to prayer and living, St. John of the Cross (along with St. Teresa of Avila) sought to restore a Church that was overwhelmed and plagued by the things of the world. In reading his writings and about him -whether unjustly jailed by other Church officials or abandoned by those who were to care for him - he knew God's great love for him and sought to respond from the deepest parts of himself.

I think he might be a good saint for us to pray with this week and, perhaps, accept his invitation to a deeper and inner quiet. It was part of my prayer for the Novena of Grace. There are so many distractions and so many calls on us to respond (not all bad!) that there is no time to just be. I actually imagine the questions John the Baptist had today in the Gospel coming because he was in jail. It was quiet. He was alone. From there the questions formed. The desire to know more increased.

So some quiet thoughts..

- 1. Make time and space for the next few weeks.** No excuses. Set a time. Early morning, great. Late at night, sure. Whatever is going to work for you. Find a spot you can

return to each day. It might be the Church here on Post Avenue or perhaps a place in your home.

- 2. Bring some tools (but too many).** What about praying with the Gospel of each day? (The Christmas Novena Booklet might be perfect for this.) Find one line or a few words that stick with you. Are you a writer or a drawer? Then, bring a pad or a small journal. Just one or two things. Not too much. Maybe light a candle if you think it can help.

- 3. Be quietreally.** This does not mean that we should not only not talk but really work to quiet our minds. Ask God to help you. If a distraction jumps in your mind, push it out. Listen to your breathing....move into the quiet.

- 4. Set a time limit.** You can go longer but try ten minutes each day - maybe it moves up a minute each day too.

There may be some unsettling moments in this work. Maybe some questions, even some doubts may arise. Perhaps you are called to look at a certain place of

darkness in your own life or in the world. But often those moments can bring us to deeper places, even in the silence.

Now, we are not called to be monks. So we should make an effort to join in the Simbang Gabi Masses or attend a celebration of Las Posadas (we're hosting it here at the Rectory on the 19th!), pray the Christmas Novena, and, of course, participate with family and friends to celebrate when we can. Amen to all of this! But can each one of us work in the spirit of John of the Cross to find some of that deeper quiet, that deeper peace we need.

The first words in *The Spiritual Canticle* of St. John of the Cross are "Where have you hidden, Beloved?" In the quiet discernment he came to see, to know, and to feel (and to write about) the presence of the divine in his heart. He knew God was with him, indeed a real reason for rejoicing.

Please pray for me. I promise the same.



Featherman