

THE PASTOR'S POST

ZEBULUN AND NAPHTALI

Dear Parish Family:

"They picked up my dad on Friday."

Michael (not his real name) is a student in one of the classes I have taught here at St. Brigid's. He came to get a form signed and looked sad. He's a quiet kid. I asked if he wanted to sit for a minute so we did outside of St. Anthony Hall. "So what's going on?". *"They picked up my dad on Friday"*.

It's a sentence, in some form or another, many of our brothers and sisters are saying these days. While we are drawn to the injustices and the work for justice in places like Minnesota, each day brothers and sisters are being picked up. Michael's dad came here over 20 years ago. He came because his life was threatened in his home country. His parents sent him to be with family here so he could be safe. A ray of hope for them.

The paperwork of immigration fell to the side. The process was overwhelming. So he worked, formed a family, worked more, provided for his kids, kept them safe.

Picked up. Moved three times in six days to various parts of the country. Michael was able to see him a few days ago in New Jersey. *"My dad has lost weight. They are not taking good care of him. He'll be OK, Fr. John. I know he will."*

He is unsure where his dad is today. His name has disappeared, we hope temporarily, from the database.

The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light (Isaiah 9:1). We heard this line at the Mass at Night at Christmas. But today, we hear the verse before. We hear about these two lands - Zebulun and Naphtali; that have been destroyed and invaded. The *Liturgy and Life Study Bible* (Yes - there is such a thing and I have a copy!) says "these two tribes were the first to be devastated (733-32 B.C.) at the time of the Assyrian invasion" (p. 1519).

It is here, in the midst of the darkness, that the Lord provides a way - a seaward path - to light and to restoration. Here, in this place of Gentiles (outsiders to many), Jesus calls, dwells, heals, and restores.

This is where we must be too - among the outsiders, in the darkness, with those picked up, with those left behind. While the real life example I have provided relates to immigration, it is not only

about immigration. It is where we encounter darkness and division, wherever we encounter injustice and intolerance, wherever we encounter racism and raids of hatred.

I find myself at a loss when it comes to some of the darkness these days. I keep asking God, "What do we do?" "What do you want of me?" "How can we figure this out?" I cannot say I have received any profound answers yet. God takes time. We'll figure out the path.

Two areas for me to focus on this week - Word and Witness.

Word. Today, we celebrate the Sunday of the Word of God. Pope Francis instituted this feast a number of years ago. It's a call to recognize the importance of the Word of God in our lives. Maybe a good reflection for you and me today. Where is my Bible? Am I reading it? Do I try to make use of the Scriptures each day? Do I work to hear God's voice, God speaking to me?

Witness. Today, too, we begin our celebration of Catholic Schools Week. You know how incredible and how important our St. Brigid/Our Lady of Hope Catholic School is to the life of our parish and the life of the Church. There are many witnesses there for sure - students, faculty, staff, and leaders. They remind us how important it is to come together, as St. Paul reminds us today, to witness as the Body of Christ.

Michael did not know all that St. Brigid's tries to do for people in need. So today, we'll work with him and his mom to find a way, a path, to support and encourage, as we walk together in these days of darkness. Hopefully we can bring some light to their path.

So inspired and challenged by God's Word, let us pray that together we can witness. Not as you or I may want but as God wants. It eventually worked for those early the disciples. Let's pray the same for you and me.

Please pray for me. I promise the same.

Featherman

