

THE PASTOR'S POST

NO ORDINARY TIME

Dear Parish Family:

This upcoming Tuesday, near the Feast Day of St. Brigid, we will gather for a day of prayer and reflection for our pastoral staff and team. I invited Mary McMahon to lead the day. Mary is the Director of the Office for Protection of Children and Young People in the diocese. She is an incredible social worker, a woman of deep faith and, in many ways, a prophet.

I called her yesterday to go over the day. I was talking to her about what we are working on and some of our challenges, not to mention some of my own. She said, "You know, John, I have looked through the bulletin too and the website. There's no Ordinary Time at St. Brigid's!" She was referring to the variety of initiatives and events we offer here at St. Brigid's. She made me laugh. For, though we gather in these days of Ordinary Time in the liturgical cycle, there is no ordinary time at St. Brigid's.

So, on this February 1st, as we celebrate the Feast of St. Brigid today, we give thanks to God for the gift of St. Brigid and through her example our parish community.

This Sunday, the 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, we pray with the Beatitudes - this mission statement for ministry and mission for the disciples. From the beginning of his mission in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is calling his disciples to look at eternal life. Our direction is always heaven-ward, working where we can to create heaven on earth.

Last week, in my Confirmation small group in Fire 2 in our Family Faith Formation program, we shared about the Beatitudes and the call to living humbly as disciples. It's not only a good lesson for Confirmation candidates, it's a good lesson for each one of us. The phrase "poor in spirit" inspired a good discussion. At first, everyone thought it to be a negative thing. As we broke it down, a light bulb of sorts went off for them. To be poor in spirit, in the spirit of these Beatitudes, is nothing ordinary. It is to try to be free of so many of the things that can get in the way of us relying totally on God. It calls us to a rid of attachments so we may attach more completely to Christ. Nothing ordinary about this!

I cannot help but think of that extraordinary poverty of spirit that dwells here in this parish community. Again and again, I am humbled by the prophetic witness of so many in our parish. It is a reminder to me, again and again, how much work is needed in my own spiritual life.

I see this extraordinary poverty of spirit in a school that ministers to all of God's children in incredible and amazing ways, in ways seen and more often unseen.

I see this in the quiet prayer of so many whose lives are driven by fear because of their skin color, accent or immigration status. They continue to pray, confident God will provide.

I see this in outreach efforts that seem so often overwhelming and beyond our reach. Yet we keep going confident God will give us what we need.

I see this in employees and volunteers who so often work tirelessly to all they can to provide for our parishioners.

I see this in families, working as hard as they can to share faith with their children, godchildren, and grandchildren in the Family Faith Formation program. It's humbling for them on many levels.

I see this in the devotion to prayer of so many of our homebound, trusting that God will always draw near.

I see this in so many who serve at liturgy, names frequently not known, who quietly (and some with amazing voices too!) serve so we can encounter Christ.

I see it in the prophets pushing more and more to build the Kingdom of God here and now, even when others are content with ongoing injustice.

I see it in the generosity of resources so many share that allow us to continue to carry out our mission. There are some weeks we are facing great financial

pressure. Somehow God uses so many of you to provide.

These are just some examples that call me to a deeper humility, a deeper reliance on Christ. Indeed, I am extraordinarily humbled to be part of this community. This is no ordinary place, no ordinary time.

St. Brigid is alleged to have said, "I would like the angels of Heaven to be among us." I think her prayer has been granted. Perhaps in Ireland. Definitely in Westbury.

St. Brigid, pray for us.

If you can, please say a prayer for me. I promise the same.



Father John