

From the Pastor:

I often wonder why Jesus chose fishermen to be his first disciples. Having grown up along the Connecticut River in Massachusetts, I did a lot of fishing. I say fishing, but truth be told, it was just an excuse to be out and about, playing on broken arms of trees half in the river, half out; throwing rocks, telling stories, and of course, lighting a campfire for the cooked marshmallow delights. I had no desire to eat the fish should one suddenly attach itself to the hook of my unattended pole. Fishing was not my livelihood, but occasionally, when I really did try to fish, I understood what was needed to catch fish.

These are the same qualities needed to be disciples and win converts to Jesus in that early Church: being patient, putting up with frustration, being quiet and being attentive to the tug on the fishing line. Fish don't always bite. People don't always listen. Sometimes hours go by with little or no interest in the bait. Getting results can be a long arduous process. So a fisherperson needs to wait. They need perseverance, learning never to get discouraged, and always trying again.

Most of us in Ministry know this. Parents know that too, as do teachers, therapists, and others. I bet Jesus got discouraged with the apostles sometimes. I imagine Peter and Paul had challenges in those early days of discipleship too. It goes with the territory.

Jesus saw that these ordinary simple humans, whose livelihood prepared them to be good disciples would make good fishers of men and women. They would be able to utilize those qualities that made them great fishers, to be great proclaimers of the gospel.

There is an urgency in Jesus' voice today. The notion of "what's in it for me?" is superfluous. "Come after me" is what Jesus said to the disciples. He says the same to each one of us too. "Nothing less than all of you is what I want." Go ahead, cast the line out!

Our trustees from the three parish families continue to meet regularly to discuss our future. We are praying and discerning through the process of how one priest can serve three parishes. Some of you sent in ideas, and I thank you. We are looking at many things, and we will keep you informed. Please pray for us that God grants us patience and wisdom during this difficult task. Though this has been a challenging time, navigating through uncharted waters, all during a pandemic, I have found great joy serving at all three parishes. Each of the three families is unique and each has its own special "flavor." "Come after me" Jesus said to the fishermen, and indeed he says this to me, our Trustees, and each of you during this time.

As I write this letter, I am listening to all the news about the upcoming inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect, Kamala Harris this week. Mr. Biden is quoted as saying: **"For me, faith, it's all about hope and purpose and strength; (and) faith is best seen in the dark."** Certainly he has experienced dark times in his personal life; these are dark times for our country, and our world. We are in the midst of great division, violence and brokenness and along with a pandemic. Whether we see Mr. Biden as a Catholic in "good standing" or not, he presents himself as honest and decent. These are not only my words but the words of many. He attends mass, takes out his rosary at times of contemplation, often quotes scripture and appears to live a

good life. Perhaps not a perfect life, but then again, my life is not perfect either. I'll accept him on these qualities and give him the opportunity to do well for our broken country and world. We may not be pleased with who is leading the country, but we can do the right thing in faith and life by being hopeful and trying to live in unity, always relying on our Catholic faith to guide us. Can we all pray for one another on this together?

We had a successful **Red Cross Blood Drive** at Immaculate Conception on January 16, and at the time of this writing, another at Our Lady of Grace on January 22. The need is so urgent that we are having more drives than usual. This is a donation that is 100% pro-life and one I hope you will consider in the future. Go to www.redcrossblood.org for dates / locations / registration.

Our Linked Parishes' **Annual Women's Retreat Weekend** is coming up on February 5-7. This will be a Virtual Retreat on Zoom from the Dominican Retreat House. For more information, call Diane Simpson at 518-399-9322.

Until next week, be well, do good deeds, and say your prayers.

Fr. Jerry