

32 Sunday C

November 6, 2022

St. Patrick

During my retreat last week, at one point I picked up a spiritual book that I turn to often in my retreats. As I paged through it to find the passage I was looking for, I saw tucked in one of the pages this folded-up half sheet, torn from a spiral notebook. Curious, I opened it. Then I remembered it. Well more than a decade ago, an 8-year-old gave me this folded-up sheet as the family and this child came in for Sunday Mass.

I read it later that day. The child printed it, and it read:

“Dear Father Val,

My worst fear is to die because everything stops forever and ever. What should I do?

Sincerely, ... ”

Then the child signed their name.

Yep, folks toss out the hard questions to the priest!

Ah, the beauty of the four seasons, and now Fall has settled in. Leaves changing color, and gracefully losing their grip on branches and float to the ground. Cold weather creeps in, telling us that the death of winter is not far away. It’s the annual pattern, and if it weren’t for the winter, we wouldn’t have the beauty of the new Spring.

Parishes go through seasons, too, just as each of us as well in our lives. In St. Patrick’s 156-year story so far, we’ve gone through many cycles of seasons—going through as a parish seasons of deaths, but also of new life. And what ties us together, St. Patrick’s, is the hope that binds us together in Jesus...and the gift of his Spirit.

Over these 156 years, there have been 25 pastors, beginning with Monsignor Martin Riordan when this parish was founded. I want to share with you a new season for me...and for St. Patrick’s. I shall be 75-years-old next summer, 2023. This past Thursday I met with Bishop David and requested that I retire as pastor of St. Pat’s at the end of next May. I told my siblings this past Friday. Today, I share

this with you, my church family. This decision to retire came after much reflection over time, and it has been a smooth discernment. I shall retire as a pastor. But, I'll still keep on as a priest, living at our Villa Vianney retirement home for priests, and serving as a "pinch-hitter" in varied parishes that may need help, and other ministry.

Two weeks ago, after Sunday Mass and just before I left to make my yearly retreat, a parishioner came down the front steps and said to me, "Father, I hope you have a happy retirement—no, I mean retreat!" I suspect it's been something many of you have been expecting. I want you to know: I have loved my six years as part of St. Patrick's Parish, and I love *you*, my church family. Thank you very much! My good friend, Brother Joel McGraw, a Christian Brother, tells me that, at 75—"Well, you begin the fourth quarter, and a lot of times that's the most exciting part of the game!" I hope!

Friends: Every church year, from the beginning of November, and for six weeks, the church calls us to face the reality of our destiny. It makes us look at what—rather, *who*—gives us hope. As the 8-year-old put it, "**to die...everything stops forever and ever.**" That was the fear of a child. We might wonder, too. How am I any different from a leaf, dying and falling to the earth? Here is our hope. We celebrate that Jesus went through the pangs of death—horribly, tortuously—on the cross. On the third day, we believe that our Savior Jesus was raised up from the tomb—triumphant forever! Then, there's the lovely hope for all of us. Listen to what the church prays at Mass: "**Christ will raise up in the flesh those who have died, and transform our lowly body after the pattern of his own glorious body.**"

This new season, the church wants us to join hands and support one another in our shared hope. As I told that 8-year-old, it not about fear. We enter each new season with hope.

General Intercessions

November 6, 2022

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Strengthen us, the church, that we might journey to our true homeland by faith, in hope, and with love; we pray to you, O Lord—

Help us, as disciples, to foster just immigration policies that reflect the Gospel of Jesus; we pray to you, O Lord—

As we observe Veterans' Day this week, bless veterans of war with peace, and let them know justice in their lives and appreciation for their sacrifices; we pray to you, O Lord—

Console and embrace the ill, those in hospice care, and those suffering from neglect and the coming cold; we pray to you, O Lord—

Fulfill the promise of Christ's victory over death in all who have died with hope, especially Father Eric Peterson, Ginger Tubbs, and those in our Book of Remembrance; we pray to you, O Lord—