

[Readings: Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104; 1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23]

The poet William Blake wrote a poem about Pentecost. Part of it says: Unless the eye catches fire, God will not be seen. Unless the ear catches fire, God will not be heard. Unless the tongue catches fire, God will not be named. Unless the heart catches fire, God will not be loved. Unless the mind catches fire, God will not be known.

There is no greater need for us to be on fire than right now! In that Spirit, as we celebrate our 60th anniversary as a parish, I share with you my observations, my hopes and my vision for us.

Everything we propose, everything we do, everything we decide: how does it affect our parish mission statement to strive, to celebrate and to serve?

I am grateful for the warm and open welcome I have received here as your pastor, now going on eight years. My friends, my family and my cardiologist all say that they have never seen me so much at peace. I thank you for that. And I thank my meds! Most importantly, I thank you for staying with your parish in good times and in bad.

I also admire the folks of St. Martin's for your openness and welcome and for the openness to the Holy Spirit for those who are in transition between parishes. I marvel at the number of families and parishioners we have here who were founding members of the parish. Would those of you who were here at St. Martin's since the early 1960's please raise your hands? The 70's and 80's. The 90's and the early 2000's. The last twenty years. Thank you for your faithfulness.

Over the 60 years, our parish, like all parishes, have had highs and lows, moments of grace and moments of sin. What I marvel at is how most of you have stayed loyal to your parish. The complexion of our parish has changed over these sixty years. When we were founded, the City of Warren was fertile with Catholics. 80% of the residents of Warren in 1962 were Roman Catholic, and of that 80%, another 80% were Polish-Americans and Italian-Americans. The building boom necessitated the establishment of twelve Roman Catholic Parishes. The community was plentiful, young and growing.

The next era of the Church in Warren was full of activity. The young, the middle-aged and the elderly formed social groups, ministries and services.

There were dozens and dozens of social organizations for every parishioner, for every talent and for every gift. The golden years of our parish were probably during the 1970's and 1980's. Monsignor John Hall was pastor at the time, reminding us that the proper spelling of his last name was B-O-S-S! We also learned that his favorite song at Mass was Let There be Peace on Earth.

We had so many students in our religious education/faith formation program that we had early time-release schedules with the public schools. During the 1960's and 1970's we had between 1000 and 1500 students enrolled in our after school programs! We even had groups meeting in private homes. By the year 2002, only twenty years ago, those numbers fell to about 400. By 2012, we were down to 219. We now have about 60 students, including those preparing for Confirmation.

With the arrival of the 21st Century, we continued to live out our parish mission statement, revised and approved by our Parish Pastor Council in 2012: *We, the parishioners of St. Martin de Porres of Warren, reflecting the qualities of our patron saint, strive to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, to celebrate the mystery of God's love in our midst, and to serve one another and the wider human community, thus continuing the Mission of Jesus.*

The Catholic complexion of the City of Warren changed radically over the last twenty years as younger families moved north and east, and our most active parishioners got older and more limited in their ability to serve. Founding members and parish leaders were called home to the Lord. Our "pillars of the parish" got fewer and fewer, with very few Catholic families and individuals moving into the Warren area. Here are the parish statistics since our 50th anniversary celebration only ten years ago, in 2012:

Sacramental Statistics 2012 – 2022

Year	Baptism	RCIA/Faith Formation	1st Comm	Confirmation	Marriage	Deaths
2012	53	1/219	47	43	17	83
2013	58	3/219	47	29	13	98
2014	26	2/219	43	29	14	61
2015	15	4/263	31	27	7	82
2016	13	2/235	23	34	7	75
2017	11	7/171	18	39	0	68
2018	11	0/110	11	35	3	79
2019	6	0/110	11	24	1	59
2020	3	4/65	9	19	2	64
2021	6	0/57	6	18	2	60
2022	1	1/48	8	18	2	30 as of Saturday.
TOTALS	Baptism	RCIA/Faith Formation	1st Comm	Confirmation	Marriage	Deaths
	203	24/1716	254	315	68	759

This change was noted in the entire Archdiocese of Detroit, and as the result of two waves of Together in Faith, parishes in the entire Archdiocese of Detroit were closed, consolidated or spared. In Warren, we went from twelve parishes to six. With our new process of Families of Parishes, we formed a “Family” with St. Blasé Parish, St. Ephrem Parish and St. Michael Parish, all in Sterling Heights. This is an exciting time for our parish, and for all parishes.

The best gift all of you at St. Martin de Porres can give is your openness to the Holy Spirit, your generous moral support and to keep your sense of humor!

Do you remember the Great Flood in Warren back in 2014? Our rectory (the priest’s house) and the Parish Center were spared, but the church got 4 feet of water in the basement. I had to say something the following weekend.

You and I didn’t know each other very well – I had been here only less

than two months, when I made you laugh for the first time. Before I began my homily, I said at each Mass: "At the count of three, I want you to say this with me only once. THIS NEVER HAPPENED WHEN FR. ROMAN WAS HERE!" You did, you got it out of your system, and I never heard those words again!

The second time I remember everyone laughing in church was when the Gospel said this: "Everyone who humbles himself will be exalted, and everyone who exalts himself will be humbled." Then I led us in a chorus of "O Lord, It's Hard to be Humble!" There have been many other laughs along the way.

On that first Easter Sunday evening, Jesus Christ appeared in the Upper Room, wished His Apostles His peace and breathed His Holy Spirit of peace upon them. Peace of mind. Peace of heart. Peace of soul.

On that first Pentecost Sunday, the Upper Room shook and the Holy Spirit set the Apostles and Our Blessed Mother "on fire" which gave them a boldness and a courage to go out and proclaim the Good News. That's what we celebrate today.

Duke University did a study on "peace of mind." Factors found to contribute greatly to emotional and mental stability are involved in action.

These factors will help us in our vision for the future and in our mutual cooperation, and bring us the peace of the Risen Lord, the peace of His Holy Spirit, and the peace of mind we crave as individuals and as a community.

These factors include the absence of suspicion and resentment. Nursing a grudge is a major factor in unhappiness. Not living in the past. An unwholesome preoccupation with old mistakes and failures leads to depression.

Not wasting time and energy fighting conditions you cannot change. Cooperate with life, instead of trying to deny it, fight it or run away from it.

Cultivating the old-fashioned virtues of love, humor, compassion, loyalty.

The Holy Spirit speaks through broken people to a broken world, using a language that every broken heart can hear and understand.

Because we know what it is like to be broken, we can speak of the healing love of Christ's sacrifice. We can witness the healing hope of Christ's forgiveness. We can speak of the healing faith in Christ's promises

In 1980, Senator Ted Kennedy failed to receive the presidential nomination at the Democratic National Convention. Instead, he spent the rest of his political years as a prominent and influential Dean in the U. S. Senate.

The words at the end of his concession speech touched my heart and come to mind now as we look back and as we move forward: “For all those whose cares have been our concern, the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die!”

So we can say this with confidence: “For all that has been, we thank You Lord; for all that will be, we say YES!” St. Martin de Porres, pray for us! Happy 60th Anniversary! AMEN! ALLELUIA!

[Readings: Proverbs 8:22-31; Psalm 8; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15]

About twenty years ago, a book came out called “The Shack.” It was such a popular book that a movie was made of it ten years later. The book was given to me by a friend to help me in my spiritual journey. And then I saw the movie. I’m not recommending that you see the movie. But if you do, a couple of disclaimers. First of all, some theological ideas offered in the book do not coincide with our Catholic theology. Secondly, there are characters presented in a controversial and challenging way. But the movie does have two powerful scenes that tie in to today’s Feast of the Holy Trinity.

The story focusses on Mac, the father of two young children who goes camping with his family at a nearby lake. An unspeakable tragedy happens involving his little girl, who is kidnapped, raped and in killed in a rundown shack not too far away. Several months after the tragedy, Mac receives a letter in the mailbox which sits at the edge of the street in a mound of freshly-fallen snow. Mac notices that there are no footprints in the snow, but that the mailbox door is open, and a white envelope rests within.

The envelope has a single sheet with the simple message, “Mac, meet me at the Shack. God.” Mac wrestles with the invitation and finally decides to go alone. As he arrives at the crime scene, traumatic memories and feelings boil over. He then sees a man who looks a lot like Jesus Christ, who invites Mac to his cottage own for a meal. As Mac enters the cottage, he sees two other people sitting with Jesus at the table – a large black woman and a slender Indian woman.

As the three sit and interact, Mac is impressed with the peace, joy and fraternity of the three. What a wonderful image of the indwelling of the Holy Trinity! At the end of the meal, Mac finally asks, “All right, which one of you is God?” All three answer: “I am!” The Most Holy Trinity is revealed!

As the story progresses, Mac begins to relate to each of them. They help Mac come to healing, reconciliation, and peace. When Mac asks Papa why she doesn’t look like God the Father, she replies, “Because you have Daddy Issues you haven’t resolved yet. You can’t see me as a father. But you will.”

Each one of the Trinity in their own way are able to touch Mac’s pain, to feel his pain, and to restore his broken relationship with God. It is a beautiful image of The Trinity all working to love us.

We know the Lord is with us the whole time. That is what Mac discovers in this Trinitarian experience. He discovers that we have this most gracious God. Even in moments of darkness and struggle.

St. Paul reminds us of this in today's Second Reading: "Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

What do YOU do when YOU feel overwhelmed, perhaps after experiencing a traumatic event or receiving bad news? We certainly are getting an extra portion of bad news every day, aren't we?

Jesus had the insight to realize that His followers were about to be traumatized by His Crucifixion, so He promises them further guidance by way of the Spirit once they could "bear" to hear it. It is important for us to know when we need some healing time BEFORE moving forward, especially when confronted with loss or setback.

Truth is often unbearable, as Jesus himself noted to his disciples. A 90-year-old friend of mine likes to say, "If you knew everything that was going to happen to you from the beginning, you'd slit your throat." In the movie, "O, God," George Burns, who plays God, is asked by John Denver, who plays a grocery store clerk, to know everything about his own life. God says, "You couldn't take it all in if you knew everything." Decades later, in the movie, "A Few Good Men," Jack Nicholson tells Tom Cruise, "You can't handle the truth!"

This could be a pessimistic outlook, but it's certainly true that we often look back at things we've been through and are grateful we didn't know all the details up front, right? Too much information too soon can be discouraging even to the most courageous heart.

We have to grow into wisdom simultaneously with the grace necessary to understand it, as Jesus did. Only then can we discover the truth about ourselves: that we are stronger, braver, and more heroic than we ever dreamed possible. Another way of saying this is that the indwelling Spirit of God is more accessible to us than we may think. If we foreclose on our futures too soon, we miss the vast potential of God to be God in us.

The truth is not always unbearable. Sometimes it is reason to dance, as Wisdom demonstrates in Proverbs. God frontloaded creation with nothing but goodness, and though we've managed to pack a lot of evil into human history, that does not diminish the

goodness still available. The Spirit of Truth is prepared to lead us straight to the best of this world, if we are prepared to follow.

Back to “The Shack.” I love the character in the movie, Papa. She is a very gracious and loving woman. She says over and over again throughout the movie to Mac, “Mac, I’m especially fond of you.” Any time anybody’s name is mentioned, she says, “You know, I’m especially fond of that person.” Mac finally says, “Is there anyone you’re not especially fond of?” Then God the Father says, “Haven’t found them yet.”

We have this God that is especially fond of you and me. He is so gracious to us. God the Father is so gracious. Jesus is so gracious. The Holy Spirit is so gracious. They are all just spilling out with grace for us.

God wants to welcome all of us to the table of the Lord. Ultimately, this is the table where you get to experience the graciousness of God. The kindness of God. God who is slow to anger and rich in mercy. Right here, we get to experience the love of the Trinity.

As Mac grapples with trying to get to know each one, there is a scene in the movie where he sits next to Jesus. He said “Listen, I feel comfortable with you. I am not sure about those two yet.” I think it is true with all of us. We tend to have a more comfortable connection with a person of the Trinity. My invitation to you is to see who you are more comfortable with. God sent His only Son into the world to reveal the Father to us so we can truly know, once and for all, what God is like. Reflect on the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. What your relationship is like with each one of them. If you notice that one is weaker, to ask God to help you grow in that. I myself feel most strongly connected to the Holy Spirit. I’m pretty good with Jesus. But I’m still working out my own Daddy Issues with the Father! That is the whole essence of liturgy and of prayer. I invite you to reconnect and to have that deeper relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. AMEN!

[Readings: Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Luke 9:11b-17]

This Sunday, fittingly, the solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus, after what seems like an eternity of anticipation, the U.S. bishops will officially begin the National Eucharistic Revival. Dioceses and parishes across the country will be holding special Eucharistic processions, such as will take place here in the Archdiocese of Detroit later today from the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament to Sacred Heart Major Seminary – a two mile long procession. Masses, Holy Hours and festivals to celebrate what we know to be true: that Jesus Christ is present with us today and always -- Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity— in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

A recent Our Sunday Visitor recently wrote of a conversation that took place decades ago between Catholic author Flannery O'Connor's and the novelist Mary McCarthy, herself raised Catholic, who said that, as she had matured, she had come to regard the Eucharist as just a symbol and "a pretty good one" at that. O'Connor replied, in a very shaky voice, 'Well, if it's only a symbol, to hell with it.'" Of that exchange, O'Connor later wrote: "That was all the defense I was capable of but I realize now that this is all I will ever be able to say about [the Eucharist], except that it is the center of existence for me; all the rest of life is expendable."

How many of us can say with Flannery O'Connor that the Eucharist "is the center of existence for me; all the rest of life is expendable?" Would our children, our fellow parishioners, our co-workers, our friends say that this is true of us?

In the end, the success of the National Eucharistic Revival depends not on the bishops, but on each one of us. The more deeply we encounter Christ in the Eucharist, the more our lives will reflect that encounter. Saint Luke calls the Eucharist "the breaking of the bread." Saint Paul calls it "the supper of the Lord." Jesus says it is "the new covenant in His Body and Blood." Most of us use the words "Holy Communion" or "Most Blessed Sacrament." Pope Francis said that the Eucharist is not an award for good behavior, but medicine for the sick. None of us is worthy to have the Lord, "Come under our roof" as we say before receiving Holy Communion.

However you describe it, Eucharist is the centerpiece of the Catholic Christian experience. Especially as the Real Presence of Jesus. WHAT is the "Real Presence?"

That means that Jesus Christ is really and truly present in the Eucharist in His Body and Blood, Humanity and Divinity, under the form of bread and wine. Really! Someone – an atheist – once said, “If you Catholics really believed in the Real Presence, you would come up and receive Communion on your hands and knees!” He has more of an understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist than most of us!

There are other special words that speak of what we do when we have Eucharistic Adoration. I would like to take the words common to Adoration and apply them to what happens AFTER we leave here, WHEN we encounter one another, HOW we become, how we bring and how WE can be the Real Presence to our world. The words are Exposition, Adoration and Benediction.

First, **Exposition**. We expose ourselves for who we really and truly are. Psychologists say that we are an emotional Holy Trinity: the public person we display to others; the private person we display to our more intimate family and friends, and the person we are afraid to show to anyone for fear of guilt, shame, or misunderstanding. In a speech to the priests of Rome, Pope Francis said, “What determines the holiness of priests is not what happens here in church, but what happens after work in the rectory!” When we expose ourselves in our vulnerability, when we let others see us as God sees and knows us, we can acknowledge that we are all of one family and are all redeemed, saved, by the merciful peace and righteousness of God.

Second, **Adoration**. Picture it. The Golden Girls. Dorothy and her mother are sitting on the couch watching TV. But Dorothy is gazing with love in her eyes at her mother. She just sits and stares. Finally, Sophia says, “What are you doing?” Dorothy says, “Nothing, Ma. Just looking at you and loving you.” And Sophia says, “Well stop doing that. I’ve been wanting to pick my nose for the last five minutes!”

Parents, do you look lovingly at your children on a regular basis? Or do they see on judgement and criticism. Spouses, do you still look at each other with love in your eyes? That’s adoration. What do you do during Eucharistic Adoration? Sit quietly and let the Son shine in your soul, as Sr. Pat often says.

Have a silent conversation with the Lord. Pray your favorite prayers. Bring to mind all the blessings you have and give thanks.

Finally, **Benediction**. Blessing. We are blessed by the monstrance, which is a holder for the Blessed Sacrament in the form of the priest's host. The word monstrance means to display, to show. In our case, it means to make real what we celebrate within these walls. Pope Francis says the simplest ways we do this is when we perform the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Here are some other ways to do it: in public, in our homes, in our communities, in our country. In all of these ways, WE become a benediction, a blessing, to all those around us. That's one of the reasons why we have Eucharistic Processions in neighborhoods: to bring the Body of Christ into the world physically and sacramentally.

Exposition, Adoration, Benediction. Expose, adore, and bless.

Because today is Father's Day, I close with a short comment about fatherhood on this Father's Day written by Dr. Greg Popcak.

First of all, there IS a difference in parental roles. Mothering gives children the ability to tolerate stress more effectively; nurturing fathers give a greater capacity to regulate aggression. Together, moms and dads' unique gifts help kids develop a full range of language skills.

Multiple studies have shown that even in households where mothers are active in their faith, it is the father's level of involvement in a faith tradition that most consistently predicts whether a child will come to own their family's faith as an adult and allow their faith to have a practical impact on their life choices. Dads, the faith practice of your children depends on your own faith practice or lack of it.

While faithful moms convey a spiritual sensitivity to their children, faithful dads influence the degree to which faith is practiced and lived in the world. The science is clear. Mothers and fathers are not interchangeable, nor are they replaceable. Mothers are mothers and fathers are fathers.

The loss of a mother or a father is devastating, and the benefits lost by the absence of a parent of either gender simply cannot be made up for by filling that space with another caregiver of the same gender. That isn't a judgment on the nurturing skills of that same-gendered caregiver. It's just science. It turns out that Mother Nature simply doesn't care about gender politics, no matter how much progressive culture warriors try to re-educate her.

So, let's celebrate the uniqueness of dads and rejoice in all the ways fatherhood is a blessing to our children. A Happy and Blessed Father's Day to all who serve as Dads to us! AMEN!

[Readings: 1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21; Psalm 16; Galatians 5:1, 13-18; Luke 9:51-62]

WASHINGTON - In response to the Supreme Court of the United States issuing its ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, Chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Pro-Life Activities issued the following statement:

"This is a historic day in the life of our country, one that stirs our thoughts, emotions and prayers. For nearly fifty years, America has enforced an unjust law that has permitted some to decide whether others can live or die; this policy has resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of preborn children, generations that were denied the right even to be born.

"America was founded on the truth that all men and women are created equal, with God-given rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This truth was grievously denied by the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* ruling, which legalized and normalized the taking of innocent human life. We thank God today that the Court has now overturned this decision. We pray that our elected officials will now enact laws and policies that promote and protect the most vulnerable among us.

"Our first thoughts are with the little ones whose lives have been taken since 1973 – 62 million lost lives. We mourn their loss, and we entrust their souls to God, who loved them from before all ages and who will love them for all eternity. Our hearts are also with every woman and man who has suffered grievously from abortion; we pray for their healing, and we pledge our continued compassion and support. As a Church, we need to serve those who face difficult pregnancies and surround them with love.

"Today's decision is also the fruit of the prayers, sacrifices, and advocacy of countless ordinary Americans from every walk of life.

Over these long years, millions of our fellow citizens have worked together peacefully to educate and persuade their neighbors about the injustice of

abortion, to offer care and counseling to women, and to work for alternatives to abortion, including adoption, foster care, and public policies that truly support families. We share their joy today and we are grateful to them. Their work for the cause of life reflects all that is good in our democracy, and the pro-life movement deserves to be numbered among the great movements for social change and civil rights in our nation's history.

"Now is the time to begin the work of building a post-*Roe* America. It is a time for healing wounds and repairing social divisions; it is a time for reasoned reflection and civil dialogue, and for coming together to build a society and economy that supports marriages and families, and where [every woman has the support](#) and resources she needs to bring her child into this world in love.

"As religious leaders, we pledge ourselves to continue our service to God's great plan of love for the human person, and to work with our fellow citizens to fulfill America's promise to guarantee the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all people." May God's will be done. AMEN!

And now, my homily!

Psychologists refer to people who have what is called "termination issues:" They can't seem to hang up the phone, say goodbye at the door, or leave an email unresponded to. They can't stop talking or even make room in a conversation for the person who's forced to endure the onslaught of their words in person or in the land of Facebook, Tweets, and text messaging. For us or for them, it's not breaking up that's hard to do. It's signing off!

We share the pain of young Elisha, who's minding his own business on the family farm when along comes Elijah, casting his cloak over the boy. This gesture is not made because Elijah thinks Elisha is cold in the field.

Putting your cloak over someone else's shoulder is a sign of passing your authority onto that person. I empower you to continue the mission. Elijah claims Elisha for God's will and plans. Elisha doesn't ask for this assignment. He was just doing his duty as a son, plowing the fields at home, when all heaven breaks loose.

The poor fellow is forced into what a scripture scholar (Rudolf Bultmann) calls the “Moment of Decision.” Everything in life leads up to this one moment. A moment of decision, in Elisha’s case, with no time to think straight. He blurts out his need to kiss Mom and Dad goodbye. This is an admirable and perfectly understandable expression of love and loyalty. There’s nothing out of proportion about his request. But both the disciple and the prophet have to put their divine call in perspective of earthly things. If this farm boy can’t distinguish between his earthly parents and God Almighty, he’s got some learning to do!

We who experience “termination issues” in every doorway of life can’t help but feel how harsh that is. Why does Elisha have to leave right this minute? And is it strictly necessary to kill and sacrifice off the oxen – part of his apparently very rich family’s income and estate, and surrender all ties to his past life and dreams? Yet he leaves all behind to follow Elijah eventually to condemn the activity of the government of that time and to suffer the persecution that would follow. We can do no less in this time and in this place.

Needless to say, by the time we get to today’s Gospel, we’re primed for and expecting resistance. Once more, Jesus accepts no excuses or delays when He issues His invitation: “Follow me.”

It’s more of a command than a suggestion. The person invited can refuse to comply; sadly, most of them do. They all express reasonable objections. Let me establish myself in my profession and put something aside for my family. Let me take care of my parents until their old age and death. But the message is clear: The kingdom won’t wait. In one sense, Jesus is saying: turn your back on your past life, on your life of sin and selfishness, and come and follow me.

Yes, show respect and concern for your parents and for your family, but make your good-byes, forsake your former way of life, and come and follow Me.

Have you ever had such a “Moment of Decision” when you had to make a life-changing decision? Mine was when the Lord confirmed my discernment to enter the seminary and to become a priest. I haven’t looked back since. And it’s been the best choice God ever made for me!

A disciple must know when it's time to GO and time to GROW. A true disciple doesn't do everything his or her way; their task is to FOLLOW Jesus, not to write the script of His mission. What is discipleship? "Discipleship" means "student," from the Latin *discipulus*, and originally it described how the Lord was Israel's ultimate teacher through the instructive power of the Law.

In the ancient world, disciples lived with their teachers until they were ready to become rabbis or prophets themselves. This is the concept of modern day seminaries and houses of formation for men and women. So it was startling when Jesus comes along and makes immediate disciples of His followers.

Perhaps the most intriguing part of Jesus' invitation to discipleship was that it took place during the ordinary events of life: at a fisherman's boat, at a tax man's table. Not in a church or temple. It requires an immediate response and then deepens "along the way" with Jesus, toward a radically new life.

Today's Responsorial Psalm describes the challenge perfectly: to "set the Lord ever before me." And St. Paul calls us today to a radical love for ourselves and for one another that begins with God and flows out into all of our relationships. To love one another at the same time as we love ourselves. "The flesh" means anything that draws us away from God: jealousy, anger, selfishness, addiction, quarreling, dissension and inappropriate desires.

Three questions for you today to consider:

How is your Christian discipleship lived out in your relationships? What relationships are toxic, deadly, leading you away from God, and which relationships are healthy, a life-giving reflection of your relationship with God?

Where is the Lord leading you where you would rather not go? What are the obstacles that are distracting you and keeping you from going in that direction? Is it fear of thinking outside the box? Is it fear of the transition? It's not the change that we fear most, it's the process of transition.

Finally, *where can you go to find the help you will need to get to where the Lord wants you?* I'm here. The parish staff is here. God's Word is available. So are His Sacraments. You have all the tools you need to get to where God wants you.

So, leave all things behind, or at least give them the proper priority, and come and follow HIM – in your relationships, in the new places God wants to lead you, and in the thrilling adventure of the journey. AMEN!