

Welcome! A letter from our Pastor

Dear friends in Christ,

On this 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time we hear one of my favorite Gospel passages, the famous Good Samaritan story from Luke 10:25-37. The idea of a “good Samaritan” has moved beyond the bible and entered into the popular lexicon. There are now so-called “Good Samaritan” laws in most cities and we often refer to someone who does something kind without being asked as a “good Samaritan.”

Undoubtedly we’ve heard this parable countless times in our lives, but it can still pack a punch. “Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” That question never fails to stop me in my tracks. The answer is so simple to respond to in our head, but so challenging to live out in heart and hands.

In fact, I’d argue that the story of the Good Samaritan should shake us to our core. In it, Jesus is presenting a radical way of discipleship. It’s a timeless message that asks us to consider who is my neighbor, and what is my obligation to him or her? Societal norms may dictate we behave in a certain manner (as they did for the priest and the Levite in the story), but the Lord invites us to consider a new vision of what it means to be neighbor. Let us take that to our prayer this week, and then as Jesus instructs, “go and do likewise.”

We in Texas, and truly everyone throughout the country, are mourning the loss of life and terrible destruction as a result of the 4th of July floods that devastated Kerr County and areas along the Guadalupe River. It hit home for us at St. Vincent de Paul especially when we learned of the death of Margaret Bellows, 8, who was among those killed at Camp Mystic. She and her family have been members of SVdP for a number of years, and Margaret made her First Holy Communion here earlier this spring. We offer our sincere condolences and deepest prayers to her parents, Patricia and Warren Bellows, and all who knew and loved her.

The funeral Mass for Margaret will be this Monday, July 14 at SVdP at 10:30 a.m. We expect a very large crowd and we will have extra police and personnel on duty to help direct traffic and parking. If you are not attending the funeral, I would recommend you avoid coming to the campus between the hours of 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. that day unless you absolutely have to be here.

To help alleviate some of the congestion, we’re going to move back the start time of the usual 12:10 p.m. daily Mass by 30 minutes to 12:40 p.m. on Monday only to hopefully buy a bit more time to allow traffic to exit the campus following the funeral. If you normally attend the Monday 12:10 p.m. Mass, please make note of the adjusted start time of 12:40 p.m. I thank you in advance for your patience and understanding.

Above all, we ask for your continued prayers for not only the Bellows family, but for all families who have suffered the loss of a loved one and been impacted by the floods. There are many in Houston and the surrounding regions that are grieving, and it is good for us as the Church to be united in prayer on their behalf. May God wrap them in his loving arms and bring them his consolation and peace in the time of their unspeakable pain.

For those wishing to make a donation in honor of Margaret, the Bellows family has asked those be directed to Kids’ Meals, which seeks to help end childhood hunger in Houston (www.kidsmealsinc.org), Community Foundation of Texas Hill Country Flood Relief for Kerr County (www.CFTexas.org/CentralTexasRelief), or here directly to SVdP. For those wishing to donate through Catholic Charities, please do so through the Archdiocese of San Antonio, which includes the impacted areas, at ccaosa.ejoinme.org/helptoday.

On another note, I remind the young adults of the parish of the ongoing Café Catholica that is happening here at SVdP on Monday evenings in July. We’ve had great crowds the first two weeks – seriously, the church was packed to the gills this past week with Archbishop Joe Vasquez as the speaker – and I am looking forward to the final two sessions on July 14 and 21. If you are a young adult Catholic in your 20s and 30s, or if you know of one (hint, hint) in the demographic, please spread the word and join us. The program starts with Mass at 6:15 p.m. (preceded by confessions at 5:15 pm for those who wish), followed by dinner at 7:15 p.m., and then a talk at 8:15 p.m. before wrapping up at 9:15 p.m.

Café Catholic is close to my heart as I was among those who helped start it 26 years ago when I was the vicar at St. Michael Church in the Galleria area. We were seeking a way to unite all the young adult groups from various parishes, and those 20- and 30-somethings not connected with the Church, for a summer series of prayer, fellowship, and an inspiring talk related to their state of life. From the very first session in 1999 we were overflowing with young adults hungry to be fed, literally and spiritually! I’m overjoyed to see it still going strong these many years later and I am even more happy to be connected with it here at SVdP. I feel like I’ve come full circle with it, and I look forward to celebrating Mass for them this week. I am anxious to see our young adult ministry at SVdP grow and expand. We certainly have a number of young Catholic in our vicinity, particularly at the many institutions in the Texas Medical Center. We want them to know that SVdP is here to serve them as their spiritual home.

Finally, thank you for the warm welcome of myself and Fr. Hai at all the masses last week. It is our honor to be with you as your new pastor and parochial vicar, and we look forward to meeting many more of you in the coming weeks and months. There is a reception in the Msgr. Jamail Family Center this weekend after all the masses and I hope that you might swing by to say hello, but if not, please introduce yourself to us anytime you see us on campus. I mentioned last week that you may need to remind us of your name up to 17 times, but I promise we are working to remember it! At the very least I assure you we are remembering you in our prayers and ask that you do the same for us.

Peace,

Fr. Sean