

Welcome! A letter from our Pastor

Dear friends in Christ,

Our second reading from the Letter to the Hebrews on this 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time contains what I believe is one of the most beautiful, comforting, and challenging lines in all of the scriptures. Now admittedly, that's asking a lot. How can it be beautiful, comforting, and challenging all at the same time? Read it aloud to yourself and see what you think: *"Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith."*

I love the idea that we are surrounded by "so great a cloud of witnesses." It's a beautiful image and easy to think of the saints in that regard, but don't overlook the witnesses to the faith that you encounter every day, ordinary men and women you likely know who, through lives of service, give themselves for the good of others. They give us hope that we, too, can be a part of that "cloud of witnesses" for others. Furthermore, we are invited to "rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us." That's the challenging part, but one we must strive to do. Keep this passage handy this week and when life gets you down, let it inspire you to "persevere in running the race before" you while keeping your "eyes fixed on Jesus."

On another liturgical note, our psalm response this weekend comes from the popular Psalm 40: *"Lord, come to my aid!"* I love the simplicity of it – it's just a simple plea, "Lord, come to my aid!" When all else fails (and it usually will), we would do well to keep this psalm on our lips and beg God to indeed come to our aid.

If you are a certain age like me, you may recall that this psalm was memorialized in a song called simply "40" by the Irish rock band U2. It was released on their third album, "War," and I can tell you for a fact that on June 14, 1983, a young, dashing 17-year-old Sean with long, thick flowing hair (believe it or not, I once had a lot of hair!) was on the fifth row at the Houston Music Hall and heard this song close out what remains the greatest musical night of my life. I have been a fan of U2 ever since and have seen them numerous times since then, but that singular concert remains imprinted on my soul. There were only about 2,000 of us in attendance that night I think everyone of us was singing this psalm from the bible as we walked out of the Music Hall. *"I have waited, waited for the Lord, and he stooped toward me."* What a beautiful image of the Lord stooping – reaching down – to come to our aid. Young Sean didn't know it at the time, but that song and this psalm would go on to play an important part of his spiritual life ever since. To you youngsters out there who don't know what an album is, I encourage you to search for "40" on Spotify, TikTok, or YouTube or wherever you find music these days. I pray it will touch your soul, too!

OK, enough with the trip down memory lane. Let's look ahead and not behind us. We are about two months out from the annual SVdP FunFest, taking place on October 18-19. For my fellow newbies in the parish, FunFest is the parish's yearly festival (or bazaar) and I'm told it is an event not to miss, and so I'm not going to! I've got it on my calendar and

I look forward to taking it all in, from the spaghetti dinner and Bingo on Saturday evening, Oct. 18 (I've been known to call a game or two of Bingo, so get ready!), to the all-day festivities on Sunday, Oct. 19 which include fun for the whole family, from games to food to who knows all what. Given that we will have use of our new parish pavilion this year, too, I'm sure there are many surprises in the works. Best of all, the proceeds go right back to the parish to help fund various initiatives around campus including ministry support, sacrament preparation, and parish and community programs.

Events like FunFest only come together through the dedication and work of many parish volunteers and I invite you to join us to make the weekend a success. Andrea Quinn, our Development Manager, is engaging in underwriter opportunities at the moment, and soon you'll be hearing about other ways to get involved as a volunteer at one of the many areas of need, and, of course, ways to get your raffle tickets for the Grand Prize drawing. For now, visit www.svdp-houston.org/funfest-2025 for additional information and reserve the weekend of Oct. 18-19 on your calendar. I look forward to seeing you there!

As I mentioned previously, our Faith Formation year will be getting underway soon, and alongside it, our preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation will also commence. A reminder to teens and parents of teens that preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is separate and distinct from youth ministry (aka, Life Teen for high school students). That's a requirement of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston that Cardinal DiNardo put in place several years ago and which Archbishop Vasquez has continued. Direct sacramental preparation for Confirmation typically takes places over two years (9th and 10th grade), though upperclassmen are also welcome. In addition, students enrolled in a local Catholic high school as freshmen need only take Confirmation 2 preparation in their sophomore year.

There are two upcoming Confirmation parent nights happening this coming Tuesday, Aug. 19, for our Genesis (Confirmation 1), and next week on Tuesday, Aug. 26, for our Revelation (Confirmation 2) programs, both at 7 p.m. at the Family Center. Parents, please plan to join us so that you and your student can have the latest information and all the necessary requirements and dates for the year for your scheduling purposes.

Lastly, my thanks to our Parish Finance Council and Parish Pastoral Council, both of which I met with last week. In the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, when there is a change in pastor at a parish, the existing councils are dissolved until called back by the new pastor. I asked the current members to continue in their roles for the remainder of the calendar year to help me get further acquainted with the needs of the parish, and they all agreed. In early 2026, we will look to discern new members on both councils and chart a new path forward, but for now, I'm grateful to the "holdover" members for their willingness to serve and offer me counsel, history, and guidance in the coming months. There is much for me to learn and take in, but I've found that it is matched with an equal amount of excitement and readiness among the people of God to move forward in faith, and, with the Spirit leading us, we'll discover that together as the Body of Christ, His holy Church at SVdP.

Peace, Fr. Sean