

## **30<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time**

Cycle A 10.25.20  
Exodus 22:20-26/1 Thessalonians 1:5-10/  
Matthew 22:34-40

### **THE SILVER LINING BEHIND THE DARK CLOUDS IS LOVE**

For all the difficulties we're facing – over half the states experiencing dramatic increases in Covid infection, the heightened tensions surrounding next week's national election, the anticipated frustration of a PG&E power shut-off tonight and for the next couple days, the ongoing isolation that so many of us are feeling as the pandemic lingers with no end in sight – it's difficult to find a silver lining behind any of these clouds. I'm sure many of us have a secret desire to flee away from it all. Problem is – there's no place to go. We're stuck. Today, however, I wanted to share with you some of the personal experiences of the past couple weeks that helped me to get unstuck. They can also assure you that, in spite of our circumstances, the sacramental life of the church continues and flourishes.



As a priest, I have the unique opportunity to enter into privileged spaces in people's lives and to walk frequently on holy ground in their company. I'm called upon by long-time parishioners, as well as people I have never met, to bring something to them and to their life situation that will reflect the grace of God, the love of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. The truth is, I receive far more from

them than I could ever give. And another truth is that a pandemic virus can thwart many things and even take many lives, but it cannot stop the love of God and love of neighbor from flowing freely and abundantly.

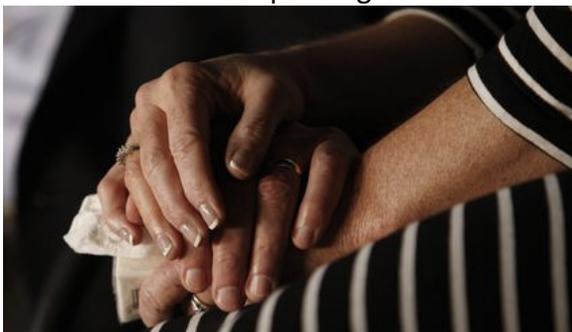
I think it's important for you as parishioners to know that, like any priest or pastoral minister, I don't carry out this role on my own or through my own capabilities or power. Even if I'm alone with a person or a family, I'm there in the name of the Church, in the name of our parish, and in the name of each one of you. I was there in your name on Friday, October 16<sup>th</sup> at Queen of Heaven Cemetery, at the graveside of **Bob Miller**, as his immediate family – his wife Sue, his children and grandchildren -- tearfully laid his earthly remains in their resting place.

64 years ago in 1956 Bob moved to Lafayette and St. Perpetua parish, just four years after the parish was founded. Each Sunday he was in church for Mass at 8:00 – a man of deep faith and a loyal and supportive parishioner. As an international entrepreneur, Bob inspired the lives of business associates throughout the world with his "can do" approach to life. As a friend, Bob made people feel at home in his presence, and I was lucky to be able to experience that friendship for over twenty years.

The next day, Saturday, October 17, a small wedding was celebrated inside our church for the first time in a long time. The couple, **Christina and Jeffrey**, weren't from our parish but were referred to us by a parishioner. They were very appreciative for the opportunity to celebrate their wedding here. The small group in attendance each received a white mask with the bride and groom's names on it and the wedding date embossed in gold. A fitting touch and a

souvenir of a pandemic wedding ceremony they won't soon forget. Last week I was called to the home of **Dorothy Allen**, another faithful parishioner who loved our community and prayed with us each week. Her time on this earth is passing quickly. Yesterday, as more of her family gathered around her, they asked me to return and pray the Church's final prayers for her and share *Viaticum* – the name given to the Eucharist when it is received by someone before death. Viaticum means “food for the journey.” Dorothy's teenage nephews held her hand, grief-stricken at the thought of losing their beloved aunt, but hopefully comforted by the prayers of the Church and the obvious strength of their bond of family love. Throughout the prayers Dorothy was aware and signed herself many times with the Sign of the Cross as difficult as that was for her. Would that we could all leave this world surrounded by such tender love and infused with such deep faith.

On Friday afternoon under the shade of the Pavilion family and friends of **Fred Sena**, a parishioner's Dad, gathered for Fred's funeral. A successful structural engineer who founded his own company and who never met a building project he couldn't tackle, Fred often joined his family here at St. Perpetua's for Mass, so it was most appropriate that we celebrate his funeral Mass on our parish grounds.



A call came last week from, **Joan**, a former parishioner requesting that I go to the home of her friend who was dying. When I arrived the woman's husband and daughter, sister and niece surrounded her bed where she had died just a short time before I arrived. Together we prayed the Church's prayer of Commendation for the Dead for this woman who Joan told me had bravely fought various forms of cancer for over a decade. All her husband could say through his tears was: *She was so courageous.* Those final prayers include a passage from the Book of Revelation that presents the image of a “New Jerusalem” – that place where *God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.. where there will be no more death, or mourning, crying out or pain... where God will make all things new.”*



And yesterday, rejoicing returned with two weddings – **Charlie and Jola** were married in our Garden of Learning and **Stephen and Jessica** were married in our church. Neither of the couples could have imagined how many times that would have to readjust and reschedule their initial plans. Neither event happened as they originally intended, yet both events were small but deeply meaningful celebrations. Through the wonders of technology the garden wedding was livestreamed to the bride's family in Poland and the groom's family in San Antonio which included his priest-brother who was supposed to be the

one presiding at the wedding, and many other family members and friends in Germany, Ireland, Canada, Chicago, Portland and Cincinnati and many other places as well. In a note that Jessica's family gave me after yesterday's wedding in the church, they included a quote from Pope Francis, which they said brings them comfort: *To live by faith means to put our lives in the hands of God, especially in our most difficult moments.*

And this afternoon, two Baptisms – a sign of new life in the Church, a future that unfolds before us, and an assurance that our lives are safely in God's hands.



I hope that by sharing with you some of life's journeys that our fellow parishioners are experiencing you'll realize that the sacramental life of the Church continues in these difficult times. May you be encouraged to stay strong in your faith and to hold fast to the great dual command that Jesus gives us in today's gospel: *"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind; and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* This closing blessing from a Prayer Book someone referenced seems a fitting conclusion:

*The world now is too dangerous and too beautiful for anything but love.  
May your eyes be so blessed  
you see God in everyone.  
Your ears, so you hear the cry of the poor.  
May your hands be so blessed  
that everything you touch is a sacrament.  
Your lips, so you speak nothing  
but the truth with love.  
May your feet be so blessed  
you run to those who need you.  
And may your heart be so opened,  
so set on fire, that your love,  
**your** love, changes everything.  
And may the blessing of the God who  
created you, loves you, and sustains you,  
be with you now and always.  
May it be so.*

*John Kasper, OFS*