

Pastor's Column

Sunday, January 29, 2023

I want to reflect, over the next four weeks, on four virtues that are going to be essential for the transition that we will experience with whatever decision is made regarding the future of Mary Queen of Peace in light of the All Things New Initiative.

The virtue this week: Fidelity. One of my heroes is Winston Churchill. His spirit of patriotism and practice of leadership during World War II is legendary and exemplary. He has all kinds of inspirational quotations, but one of my favorites is simple and straight-forward: "Never, never, never give up." England faced some dark, deadly days during the war; the bombings, the loss of life both on the island and on the mainland, and the constant threat of a Nazi invasion. Churchill inspired a country, and the Allies, to remain faithful to the call to confront and defeat Fascism and preserve Europe from tyranny. "Never, never, never give up."

One of the scariest statistics to come out of the All Things New process (and the history of similar Initiatives in other dioceses) is that 20% of people will stop going to church if their church closes. My first reaction to this is bewilderment: what kind of irrational and immature illogic would lead a person to make that life- and eternity- changing decision to break Communion with the Lord and the Universal Church? But then it occurs to me: perhaps the reason people leave is because they didn't get a chance to mourn and say goodbye. And then perhaps they reason they didn't back is because it hurts too much.

Change is difficult. And whatever happens to MQP we're going to have to say goodbye to what made us so unique for the last 100 years. We're going to have to say goodbye to that so that we can welcome what it is we will become for the next 100 years. There will be vestiges of the past, but some things, All Things will be New. But that newness will have to be cultivated by us, partnered with the Holy Spirit, to receive, cultivate and spread the Newness we want to become. And that will require Fidelity; that will require that we Be Present; the demand will be that we Remain, that we Abide in Him and His Church.

In John's Gospel, after the Bread of Life Discourse (chapter 6), several of Jesus's disciples stopped following him because it demanded some hard things from them. They leave and Jesus says to Peter and the other 11 Apostles: "Do you also want to leave?" Peter says, "Where else are we going to go? You have the words of Eternal Life." Whatever happens in May 2023, we are free to leave. Free to walk away (or stay and cultivate toxic discontent/cynicism) and leave others to walk with the Spirit and create All Things New. But really, before we do that, before we leave let's ask ourselves this question: where else are we going to go?

Members of this community strove to be faithful to the Lord, the Universal Church, and our parish community for many years (and we continue to do so!). We will have to say goodbye and mourn that passing and make space in our hearts and community for New Things, New People, New Traditions and Customs. But, we can never, never, never give up on Him: we can't give up on the Lord; we can't give up on following the Gospel Way of Life; we can't give up on our

Catholic Church. He never, never, never gives up on us; and we will never, never, never give up on Him. Or each other.

Know that you are loved dearly and prayed for daily.