

Dear St. Columbkille Family,

We welcome the month of October with the hope that the new season will bring peace and beauty, life and death as part of the God's creation. To start, I wish to share with you this poem I have found from William Shakespeare "Sonnet 43": "That time of year thou mayst in me behold when yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang upon those boughs which shake against the cold, bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang. In me thou seest the twilight of such day as after sunset fadeth in the west, which by and by black night doth take away, death's second self, that seals up all in rest. In me thou seest the glowing of such fire that on the ashes of his youth doth lie, as the death-bed whereon it must expire, consum'd by that which it was nourished by. This thou perceiv'st which makes thy love more strong, to love that well which thou must leave ere long".

I think that for many residents in Florida this is the time when this colorful season is missed and for those who are still up north, the preparation to travel to the south began. For all of us, on this 2020 pandemic year, many things have changed in our lives and we look forward to the end of pandemic.

Here, at St. Columbkille like everywhere, we have had ups and downs, socially, emotionally and spiritually but with the sanctuary open every day and clergy and staff doing our best to support the congregation as a sign that God is alive. As you may know, the Bishop of this Diocese has extended the dispensation from obligation to attend weekend mass until November 1st, however, we are having 5 masses on the weekend to allow participants to observe the prudent distancing, using facemasks for respect and solidarity, with access to hand sanitizer at all church entrances. Masses are on Saturday 3pm & 5pm and Sunday 9am, 11am & 5:30pm.

For many weeks, I have been updating the congregation with news and reflections I had considered appropriate for the moment in connection with the weekend readings, however, I have skipped some weeks because I have become frustrated and disappointed on many occasions. I assume that you all understand that I am human with feelings, but as we see nationwide the lack of humanity and understanding, likewise some members of the church have been projecting abundantly their unhappiness and frustrations not in a Christian way. I pray for the end of pandemic as well as the end of the election campaign because it is sad that in times of uncertainty, confusion and crisis we see more evidently the lack of spirituality among some practicing Catholics. We must remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven", if we do not reflect the presence of God and beliefs.

It is amazing how one single picture has been used as a symbol representing the people of God for centuries: "The Vineyard". In connection with this weekend readings the reality of the vineyard includes: unity in hope; exterior care and interior quality of fruits; hard work together; joy for the good wine and the harvest time reported to the landowner. More meaningful is the eschatological analogy: work and harvest; life time and eternity.

The first reading (Is.5, 1-7) and the gospel (Matt.21,33-43) this 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time express similar frustrations: What more can I do for the vineyard? From where are bad fruits are coming? What motivates some tenants to contaminate the vineyard with the blood of innocents? What would be the landowner's response to these crimes?

One thing we know for sure is the difference between God's project of life and success and human perversion; the beauty of the vineyard and the sower and bad wine.

Jesus intervened in our history to show us that God has a better plan and announced it with strong words: “He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times”. As the God of Life and fertility, he is sad and disappointed by the sterility, cruelty and death perpetrated by some human beings.

We must hear these words and ask ourselves: What am I doing with the vineyard God has entrusted to me? Judges, intellectuals, scientists, business people, teachers, parents, clergy and religious leaders, politicians and authorities: What are we doing with the vineyard God has entrusted to us?

The message of Jesus is also an invitation to appreciate the gift of life in every sense, particularly to the chief priests and elders of the people not only because their irresponsibility neglecting the vineyard but confiscating it to the point to kill for it. In other words, to reject God and destroy the creation will be the same act of self-destruction, and confiscating what belong to others will be an act of self-condemnation.

We are urged to change our mentality of which St. Paul wrote in the second reading (Phil 4:6-9): brothers and sisters: whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.

On this Respect Life Sunday, we must remember that our commitment with life should not be limited to one single issue, otherwise our speech will be politized, our defend of life should start treating each other with respect. If respect for the person who exist is violated, then our defend of life for the unborn person will be questioned and the effort to promote life will be ignored. We must be consequent with our moral fights otherwise we will become modern pharisees. Lastly, no matter who wins the election our defend of life will never end, and the mission of the church will continue until the second coming of Jesus.

In Jesus,

Fr. Lorenzo

Communion under the Portico continues on Sunday from 12noon to 12:30pm for those who watch the mass on TV (Our diocesan Mass is on Sunday 10:30am on local Fox 4) There is no need to exit your car in the driveway of the Church.

Communal Rosary and Marian Novena, Saturdays at 8:00am

Sacrament of Reconciliation under the Portico (Driveway without exiting your car) is on Saturdays from 8:30am to 9:30am.

Gospel Forum for Women Tuesdays at 9:00am at the Grotto (outside) please, bring your chair and Bible.

Men Fellowship Group is meeting online using Zoom on Mondays at 7:00pm. For additional information call Tom Holland at 508-0668.

Trunk or Treat! Saturday, October 17th after 5:00pm Mass in the Ministry Center parking lot.

Thrift Shop 20th Anniversary Celebration! Saturday, October 10th 10:00am to 5:00pm.

Youth Group 2020-2021 Confirmation Preparation / Faith Formation for Children / Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) Classes via Zoom, for additional information please see page 6 in our e-bulletin.

Upcoming Retreats and Days of Prayer at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Retreat and Spirituality Center (Venice). October dates are Oct. 11th and Oct. 14th for additional information please see page 5 in our e-bulletin.

You can always contact the clergy at (239) 634-2927 or email me at lgonzalez@stcolumbkille.com