

Dear St. Columbkille Family,

As practicing Christians, we are on a journey. Our life is not meant to be static. It is rather an ever-deepening growth in union with the God who created us. He deliberately left an emptiness within us, a chasm, a desire. It is a huge challenge for those who resist change. That longing is an invitation to set out and begin to seek God, to develop a relationship with him, which grows and develops in stages moving us to get out of our spiritual comfort zone. This journey is indeed spiritual, but because of sin, it is arduous and a struggle. The catechism tells us, "Prayer is a battle".

This journey also requires some supplies and preparation: prayer, sacraments, formation, grace, worship, but perhaps the first thing we need is a map, a GPS, so we know where we are going. The map or GPS must unroll all the way, past all of the benchmarks of conversion, which most of us have become so familiar with lately, in our work of formation; trust, curiosity, openness, seeking, devotion and discipleship.

Pope St. John Paul II in 2000 wrote: "Our Christian communities must become genuine schools of prayer, where meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly falls in love... it would be wrong to think that ordinary Christians can be content with a shallow prayer that is unable to fill their whole life". A genuine dialogue of love is made by a journey totally sustained by grace, which nonetheless demands an intense spiritual commitment and is no stranger to painful purifications. But it leads, in various possible ways, to the ineffable joy experienced by mystics like nuptial union".

When we decide to congregate, as many have decided after being away from practicing faith, we must remember that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness and not only satisfying religious nostalgia from old days. Our catholic communities are constantly challenged by members who are afraid to walk through new spiritual experiences. That was the case at St. Columbkille when I brought the idea to open the tabernacle to a personal adoration using a glass ciborium that surprisingly scandalized some, to the point to write a letter to the Bishop with the assumption that they were doing right. Just to receive a call questioning a pastoral creativity in the middle of pandemic that only tried to raise up our spirituality to the closeness of God in times of trials and confusions was truly frustrating and disappointing. For those unhappy participants, life is not a journey to go through but a rigid set of norms sometimes they don't even believe but choose the protection of their comfort zone.

When a generation of believers forgets the prophetic mission of the church of Christ and emphasize the pastoral work to maintain the status quo, history has evidenced how that generation has created a non-attractive feeling to Jesus' message for future generation. Just to see the humble and wise request from Solomon (Kings 3: 5,7 -12) on the first reading this Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> in ordinary time: "Give your servant an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong". Thus, we learn how successful Solomon was in governing Israel and how firm he was in understanding his life as on a

journey. This is the wisdom we should imitate and the type of spirituality we should develop as practicing Catholics.

There is a truth about life that we all instinctively should know, and that truth is that life is a journey. From the time we are born until the time we die we are all on a journey. And like it or not, if we don't move with it, if we try and settle down and make the present permanent, we are going to be frustrated beyond belief. The past is the past, and the present will flow into the future.

We are stuck moving through the journey of life. There will be peaks and valleys, times of drought and fertility, moments of fear and security. But from beginning to end the psalmist boldly proclaims that we can be guided and gently cared for by God who is a faithful Shepherd.

Even though our journey might bring us to times where we feel threatened, there is no place that is a stranger to God. The Shepherd will walk with us on the journey of life said the psalmist so do not fear or give up, but take hold of God's hand and let God lead.

When we ask God to walk with us on the journey of life we will discover, as St. Paul did that God is faithful. God will faithfully be by our side when our cup overflows with blessings and when that same cup grows empty and our journey is parched. We can count on God's faithfulness when we ask God to journey with us in life as Solomon did.

Beginning Monday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> St. Columbkille staff is becoming part time and the office will operate from Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 1:30pm. The church is also open from Monday to Friday from 7:00am to 12noon for personal prayer and adoration.

Special Masses will be held this week at the 8:00am Masses:

Monday, July 27<sup>th</sup>: Mass for Migrants and Refugees

Tuesday, July 28<sup>th</sup>: Mass for Unborn Children

Thursday, July 30<sup>th</sup>: Vocation to the Priesthood and Religious Life and Lay Ministry.

Friday, July 31<sup>st</sup>: For all deceased victims of the Coronavirus

**The weekend Masses** remain: Saturdays 3:00pm and 5:00pm and Sundays 9:00am, 11:00am and 5:30pm

We continue giving **Communion under the Portico 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.

**Dispensation from obligation to attend Sunday Mass in the Diocese of Venice in Florida is until September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.**

On Saturdays, we offer a **Communal Rosary and Marian Novena** beginning at 8:00am

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

This Wednesday, July 29th we are offering the **Sacrament of the Sick (Anointing) under the Portico** (Driveway without exiting your car) from 10:00am until Noon.

When you come to church you must remember to bring your face mask and keep it on out of respect for others; practice social distancing when you find a seat and when you come up to receive Holy Communion; use hand sanitizer once you enter and when you leave the church. Families may stay together, and if someone feels sick they should stay home. Your donations and offertory envelopes can be dropped off before or after mass in one of the two baskets located in front of the altar. Your financial support is very appreciated also by mail or electronically, please, contact Sergio Figueroa, the administrative coordinator if you need help.

You can always contact one the clergy by (239) 634-2927 or me [lgonzalez@stcolumbkille.com](mailto:lgonzalez@stcolumbkille.com)

May the Lord hold his hands on his people and the Holy Spirit guide us.

Fr. Lorenzo