

Pastor's Corner - August 2011

Summer time is with us, a time in which we are hopefully more relaxed, enjoying the good weather, the beauty of God's creation all around us, visits from family and friends, outdoor picnics and games, and especially each other's company. It is a special time in which we celebrate and strengthen the fact of living in community.

Your Parish Council has tried over the years to put a face to that community life here in Saanich Peninsula Parish, always in collaboration with other entities. Groups such as the Catholic Women's League, the Knights of Columbus, Friendly Hours, Religious Education, St. Vincent de Paul, Development and Peace, Hanti Sedra, Taiji Qigong, the music groups, the various liturgy and worship, prayer groups, etc., all organize events so as to bring the community together in celebrations, to strengthen the bonds of faith and love between us. That is why we see all these as ministries rooted in Jesus, in which we try to live concretely the message of the Gospel to share our faith, care and compassion and thereby become the living, visible presence of God's love and care, of God's justice and compassion.

Sometimes these groups do this on their own. More and more the need is to do so in collaboration with others, to include others in whatever is being organized so that other members of the community can also contribute to the success of an event. People do not necessarily want to belong to a specific group but they do wish and are only too happy to contribute to the life of the community. We need to give people that opportunity, that grace, by including them. I call upon all the various ministries in our Parish to see how they can reach out to others. We all know that the best way is to personally ask someone to become involved, to personally approach a person to welcome them to the parish whether as a visitor or as a new member, to invite them to stay for coffee, tea and cookies!!

Journeying in life is like the pilgrimages of old (just think of journeys to the Holy Land, to Canterbury, Compostella, etc): we do so with others, praying as we go, supporting one another as we face the challenges on the way. Our caring and reaching out need to go beyond our inner circle of family, friends or organized group and include all people.

The summer is a good time for us for some reflection and self-examination, for new beginnings. Let us meditate on some scripture passages and discern on what way we are called. Let us not be like the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), watching from the outside the circle of warmth and community open to him (you may remember the prodigal son who despite his failings, sins, betrayals, is welcomed back with open arms by the father). Luke 10: 38-42 tells us not to be distracted by our many tasks but to take the time to be at the Lord's feet, to be open to his presence, listening. Luke 11: 1-13 shows Jesus himself connecting with God in prayer in order to find guidance and strength for his mission. A true disciple must nurture that personal relationship with God which is like that of a parent with a son or daughter, like that of two spouses with each other, like that of an individual member with his/her faith community. Have a great nurturing summer.

Shalom.

Je Raef, OP