

After the Heart of Jesus ...

*Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.
Always be ready to give an explanation
to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope,
but do it with gentleness and reverence,
keeping your conscience clear,
so that, when you are maligned,
those who defame your good conduct in Christ
may themselves be put to shame.
1 Peter 3:15-16*



In praying over this Sunday's readings, I was drawn to the above passage in the second reading from the First Letter of Peter. I thought about this in light of the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the U.S. earlier this month. His brilliant and prayerful presence in Washington and New York should be a source of great encouragement for all of us in our Catholic identity. The Holy Father addressed issues of faith and religion as well as societal and worldly problems with a message of profound hope. He spoke not with the polarizing attacks and the destructive ways of dialogue of which we have become too used to in our country, but he preached his messages with conviction, gentleness, and reverence. Like St. Peter, the first pope, Pope Benedict speaks so freely of Jesus Christ, because Christ is the Lord of his life and heart.

His example can be an inspiration for us as we try to give witness to faith in our lives. We need neither his brilliant intelligence nor his prominence of office to be the disciples Christ want us to be. If we simply allow Christ to be Lord in our lives and hearts and speak with gentleness and reverence and conviction, and not in the polemical ways of this generation, then we will be instruments of God's hope to the people we meet. Gentleness and reverence are not generally found in abundance in our world, but they can be found in abundance within us.

I am grateful for the many parishioners who helped us through some difficult days the past couple of weeks. Your notes and calls of prayer and encouragement were very important to us. If anyone needs to talk more about the events, please know that I am available to meet with anyone who has questions or concerns. I simply ask that it not be at public events when I am there to greet and welcome people.

This weekend and next are special for the 175 children receiving Jesus in First Holy Communion. God is especially close to them as they receive Christ's Body and Blood for the first time. It is a fun time to remember back to our own experiences of the special feeling of receiving first communion. I will be asking the young people to pray for us as Jesus is so close to them. Please say a prayer for our young people at this joyful time.

Some quick kudos for jobs well done: (1) to the many garden angels and mulch crew (**Kathy Benages, Adrienne Worrell, Micky Pauly, Ed Burchardt, Dan MacShane, Terry Clark, Don Simonsen, Don Carani, Frank Duda, Stan Wojcicki, Marty Tasch, John Tasch, Kevin Anderson, Jim Johnson, and Christian Bandovich**), under the direction of Garden Archangel **Pat Zawis**, for the huge task of spreading five loads of mulch around campus last week. (2) to **Karen Campe** and the youth ministry leaders for having 80 teens (25 first timers) at last week's Teen Night. It is great to see the growth in our outreach to teens. (3) to **Donna Burke, Judy McGuire, Don Kaberline, Jean Gruneisen, Maureen Terrazas**, and others in the group that planned the marvelous Seasoned Adult Ministry luncheon last Sunday. Over 100 parishioners over 55 gathered for lunch and to discuss plans for a comprehensive outreach to parishioners who are Go-Go's, Slow-Go's, and No-Go's.

Please see the announcements in this bulletin regarding two upcoming end-of-the-year parish events, the State of the Parish Meeting next Sunday, May 4, from 1:30 to 3:30 in the McDonald Parish Center, and the Pentecost Vigil Prayer and Ministry Appreciation Reception on Saturday, May 11, beginning with prayer at 7:00 PM in the Church and reception following in the McDonald Parish Center. Both of these are important firsts for our parish community. Pastoral Plan Progress Reports are being inserted in this week's bulletin. These will also be available at the State of the Parish Meeting.

This week's bulletin also includes information on Peace & Social Justice. Representatives from the Peace and Justice Core Team will be speaking briefly after communion to witness to why they became involved in Peace and Justice issues. I hope to host some pastor forums this summer looking at Faithful Citizenship as we approach the Fall elections. I am encouraged by the efforts to see the important justice values of the Gospel being more promoted at St. Walter.

As we sanctify Christ as Lord of our hearts, may we live ...

After the Heart of Jesus!
Father John