

“Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his presence continually.” – 1st Chronicles 16:11

Greetings,

Beloved, Neighbors in Christ, the peace of the Triune God be with you all! Three weeks ago, we began the penitential and disciplined season of Lent. We came together as a unified parish and witnessed our mortality with the imposition of ashes on our foreheads and hands. These ashes, burned from last year’s palm leaves, are a sign that our natural lives here on earth are finite and will end; but the cross that frees us, imprinted on our bodies, further reminds us that death has indeed been defeated and something glorious awaits us on the other side.

And for me, as pastor, this is Good News...glorious news, especially as I officiated four funerals over a nine-day span. God welcomed these saints home into eternal life, the forgiveness of sins, and the sure hope of the resurrection from the One who gave himself for us. The sacrifice on the cross was given freely to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh. But that simple Wednesday was only the beginning of the season. We have been coming together as a combined parish for meals, fellowship, and continued mid-week worship too. Wednesdays and Sundays are what I call the ‘holy days’ of Lent: we give thanks to our loving God, repent of the wrong doing we have endured in our lives, and remember that we are loved not on what we do, or how we do it, but by simply taking Christ on and being the example of what we are called to be.

As I have mentioned and written before, Lent is sometimes a period of time when we give up, or fast, from something in our daily lives that we know we can handle not having for the 40 days. But instead of giving up on something and then beginning it again after Easter, what if you could take on a discipline and make it work to our advantage – and keep it going. I make you, my friends and loved ones, a challenge...how about you look for the face of God each day in your life, and share it with another person? I am not talking about the literal face of God found in pictures or artwork, but what you may call or consider the face of God. Whether it is in the smile of a child, a beautiful sunrise or sunset, a “mountain top” experience, or simply hearing someone else say or give thanks, honor that and make it your own. And then dwell on that. How does that increase your faith? What makes it so special? And so on.

For those of you who follow me on Facebook, you know what I am referring to. Each day I take a picture of where I see the face of God, edit the picture to black and white, and post it online for all to see. And thus far the responses have been great. Thank you for those who ‘like’ what I am doing, but now it is your turn. Look into your daily life and capture those moments and see what the Lord is up to in your life, and in and around the parish. Please continue to join us (or begin) for the mid-week meals on Wednesday throughout the congregations of the Neighbors in Christ Parish, and enter into a time of worship and contemplation afterwards. God gives us everything we need, so let us enjoy all of Creation, and thank the Lord as stewards of this beautiful gift we live in.

In HIS sake,

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish