

June 2021 Pastoral Message

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8

3 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

² a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

³ a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

⁴ a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

⁵ a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

⁶ a time to seek, and a time to lose;

a time to keep, and a time to throw away;

⁷ a time to tear, and a time to sew;

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

⁸ a time to love, and a time to hate;

a time for war, and a time for peace.

Grace and peace be with you all, my beloved family and friends of the Neighbors in Christ Parish.

Last evening I had the pleasure of assisting my fellow Winthrop area ministerial with the baccalaureate service for the graduating seniors of 2021. Since I have begun my ordained ministry, I have attended this enriching community event where we as a group send off the graduating seniors with a blessing of God's Word and deed as they enter into a new space; a space of adulthood, new decisions that need to be made, and even more responsibilities for their own self-care.

A lot of us remember this time: we get the diploma in hand, hug and shake hands with so many people, and then say, "Now what?" A popular text for transition comes from the Book of Ecclesiastes, the third chapter. This has often be read at graduations, times of change, and even at funerals where we say goodbye to loved ones and friends. It offers a glimpse into the life of so much that we take for granted here on earth. There is a time for everything because everything has its time.

Now what, indeed. In my heart of hearts, there are a lot of us asking the same question in our heads right now. Now what - where do we go from here? We are all in a time of transition,

whether we see it or not. The more than personal restrictions from Covid are lifted, and we look around to see if another person is wearing their mask as we venture into a business or restaurant. I carry mine in my pocket just in case I may have to put it on. There is transition there – going from one thing to another.

What I am getting at here is that we each make our own decisions on what to do next. Do I go back to the office or ask to stay home with my computer and work remotely? Do I want to congregate and see more people that I know, or do I continue to be vigilant and safe and choose to give it more time? Do I continue to have that set date to retire or do I keep working and see how long I can do this? And maybe even, do I buy that Lego toy or not, hoping this time it will be different and the pieces won't get lost even on the first day of receiving it?

Transition is tough. It is even hard. But folks, God is still there with us. Our Lord has not left us. Making decisions on what to do next may be just as simple as doing it, even before what has occurred over the last 15 months or so. I have spoken with so many of you about where to go next and my pastoral thought continues to be the same. My ask is this..."What do you want to do?" And sometimes this is the most difficult question to answer because so very often it is not asked in the very first place. What is God up to in your life and what do you want to do? Sure, there is a time for everything...but what do you want to do now? And don't forget to let the loving Creator who gives you life and everything else is there by your side.

You may have heard the phrase, Let Go and Let God. Well, I think this is where we are now. So I encourage you to read the Ecclesiastes text, and like a senior about to enter into a brave, new world, ask yourself..."Now what?" And don't forget to take God with you on this crazy adventure we call life.

Bless you all, my family and friends, and I look forward to seeing you all again real soon.

Peace,

Rev. Erik R. Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish