

- First of all today I just want to thank all of the volunteers who attended the child protection training we had on Tuesday.
- I know that it's a bit of a burden spending hours in a class addressing such a difficult subject, but hopefully your efforts will help in the overall efforts in our Church around the world to keep children safe.
- Even Pope Francis has been addressing this again recently, asking that religious superiors and bishops be fully cooperative in the efforts to rid the Church of such tragedies.
- Some people feel affronted by having to take such a class, but they really shouldn't. Judas cloaked himself with the company he kept...and evil always lurks where we least expect it.
- But know that all of our parish volunteers are much valued and appreciated, and your service to our brothers and sisters is invaluable...and doesn't that service bring joy to ourselves as well?

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- Now, today in our first reading we heard poor ol' Job lament in his misery: *"Is not man's life on earth a drudgery?...I have been assigned months of misery, and troubled nights have been allotted to me."*
  - That may strike home to many. We wake, we go to school or work, we come home...very often to more work, and we try to rest when we can. Our lives so often to seem an unending cycle...hamster on a treadmill...broken up by all-too-brief moments of rest or joy.
  - When resting we worry about what we have to do; when working, we are longing for rest. We find ourselves crying out: "Is there a purpose to it all?!"
  - And, of course, the answer is: "Yes". And what is that purpose? To love God...to love our neighbor. To lead others to God...and to bring relief of suffering.
  - What brings us more joy than bringing joy to others? To see the smile of a lonely whose day is brightened...the relief of hungry...the gratitude in the eyes of the fearful whose fear is alleviated...the

relief in clothing those without proper covering... the joy in the one who had no hope, but has now found Christ.

- Today we are having our Annual Catholic Appeal pledge drive, which assists so many in all these things...and more.
- Peter tells Jesus in our Gospel today: *“Everyone is looking for you.”*
- Yes, everyone—whether they are aware of it or not—is looking for Jesus...the reason for our lives...the fulfillment of our desires...the salvation of our souls.
- And it is the work of we Christians to utilize the blessings that we are given in order to help others find their way to Him.
- This is what the ACA does with what WE provide: it goes out and assists the needy, evangelizes those ignorant of Christ, and trains others—priests, deacons, catechists—to go out and bring Christ to the world. Prison ministry, immigrant assistance, basic legal services that the poor may have justice...all these things...and much more.
  
- Many of you have no doubt already sent in your pledges to the Archdiocese with the letters they sent out...but Dcn Don will now pass out pledge forms for those who would like to fill them out now. You can fill them out and place them in the collection basket, mail them to the diocese, or bring them back here at another time. They all are credited to our parish’s goal, which this year is just shy of \$100,000.
- For those who gave last year...to continue the same giving this year would be great.
- For those who did not give or were unable to give last year...do not let this opportunity for grace pass you by. But not a token amount, but rather something worthy to show our thanks to God.
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- Our lives are so short, and so the time to serve God and neighbor so short as well. Decades past seem like only yesterday gone.
- I look at my own life...passing so rapidly. Looking at statistics, I’ll soon be in the final third of my life...and I find myself asking:

“Will God be pleased with my service? Will I have done enough, with all the blessings He has given me in my life?”

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- Well...the way we please God and edify others is not in barricading ourselves behind walls with material possessions, but in breaking down those barriers...using the stones of our mansions to build houses for the homeless...and to provide foundations upon which others may build their faith in Christ.
- To help the poor, to evangelize those who do not know Christ, to educate and train ministers to bring God’s sacraments to His people...those are the things which truly have value...truly have real worth.
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- God never means for us to hoard blessings to ourselves, but to give as He has given. Our blessings are given us for a purpose beyond ourselves.
- People ask: “Why does God allow this poverty...that hardship? Why doesn’t He do something about it?!”
- And God answers: “I did; I put YOU there to help. Why do YOU allow this poverty, that hardship to endure when you can do something about it?”
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- Jesus tells us: “*Do good...expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons [and daughters] of the Most High.*” (Luke 6:35 RSV)
- In this time of year when we all are preparing to give to Caesar what is Caesar’s...let us certainly not forget to give to God what is God’s.
- For, as Jesus tells us, “*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*”

Reading 1 Jb 7:1-4, 6-7

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Job spoke, saying:  
Is not man's life on earth a drudgery?  
Are not his days those of hirelings?  
He is a slave who longs for the shade,  
a hireling who waits for his wages.  
So I have been assigned months of misery,  
and troubled nights have been allotted to me.  
If in bed I say, "When shall I arise?"  
then the night drags on;  
I am filled with restlessness until the dawn.  
My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle;  
they come to an end without hope.  
Remember that my life is like the wind;  
I shall not see happiness again.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

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R. (cf. 3a) Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.

or:

R. Alleluia.

Praise the LORD, for he is good;  
sing praise to our God, for he is gracious;  
it is fitting to praise him.

The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem;  
the dispersed of Israel he gathers.

R. Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.

or:

R. Alleluia.

He heals the brokenhearted  
and binds up their wounds.  
He tells the number of the stars;  
he calls each by name.

R. Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.

or:

R. Alleluia.

Great is our Lord and mighty in power;  
to his wisdom there is no limit.  
The LORD sustains the lowly;  
the wicked he casts to the ground.

R. Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.

or:

R. Alleluia.

Reading 2 1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23

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Brothers and sisters:

If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast,  
for an obligation has been imposed on me,  
and woe to me if I do not preach it!  
If I do so willingly, I have a recompense,  
but if unwillingly, then I have been entrusted with a stewardship.  
What then is my recompense?  
That, when I preach,  
I offer the gospel free of charge  
so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

Although I am free in regard to all,  
I have made myself a slave to all  
so as to win over as many as possible.  
To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak.  
I have become all things to all, to save at least some.  
All this I do for the sake of the gospel,  
so that I too may have a share in it.

**Gospel Mk 1:29-39**

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On leaving the synagogue  
Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.  
Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever.  
They immediately told him about her.  
He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up.  
Then the fever left her and she waited on them.

When it was evening, after sunset,  
they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons.  
The whole town was gathered at the door.  
He cured many who were sick with various diseases,  
and he drove out many demons,  
not permitting them to speak because they knew him.

Rising very early before dawn, he left  
and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed.  
Simon and those who were with him pursued him  
and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you."  
He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages  
that I may preach there also.  
For this purpose have I come."  
So he went into their synagogues,  
preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.