



LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS

A New Column by Fr. Tom

Looking Through Stained Glass

Over the last 18 months, I have had the distinct pleasure to be a part of our parish, St. Paul of the Cross. While I have been asked by a number of people to start a column, I have been reticent to do so, as I thought it somewhat immodest. After all, I am a pilgrim, just like you, on this journey toward Heaven. I was finally convinced when a friend told me that pilgrims need to encourage and exhort one another. In Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians, he says, "Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, as indeed you do." [1 TH 5:11] To begin my part in encouraging you, I'd like to share with you some of the things that encourage me about our faith and our faith journey, with this excerpt from comments I made at the Mass of Installation this past October:

As many of you know, I think our Catholic faith is beautiful. From the flowing rhythms of the liturgy to the eloquence of theology, from the uplifting praise of our music to the heartfelt words of our prayers, from the luminous images of our stained glass to the encouragement that comes from the statues and pictures of our saints, from the mysteries of the Trinity and the Eucharist to the history of the development of our Church, this faith is beautiful. But, today, there are two elements of our faith that evoke beauty for me more than all the others. Those two elements are the Church and hope.

One of the most beautiful parts of our faith is hope. In fact, we are a people of hope. We are a people of hope because that's what Christ taught us to be. Christ gave us hope by His Passion, Death and Resurrection. We have hope in Christ because he gave us New Life in Him. So, many of the actions that we perform as a part of our faith are actions filled with hope. We have hope at the Baptism of a new baby - her new life cries out of the care of our Lord for all of us, even the littlest ones.

We have hope at the wedding of a young couple. Their new life together reminds us of God's great gift of love. We even have hope at funerals. We have hope of a new life in Heaven for our loved one. I pray that this moment is a moment of hope for us all too.

Not that you have hope in me, but that together, we have hope that the Holy Spirit will continue to lead our parish closer to the Lord and will inspire us to invite other people to join us as disciples of Christ.

Today, I believe that the beauty of our faith is also found in the Church, and what I mean by the Church is the Body of Christ, the people. I know that I have mentioned this before, but I am so grateful for the welcome that I received when I first entered this parish a little over a year ago. [...] I always thank

God for all of you who have been so supportive of my ministry here. Over and over again, I am awestruck by the beauty of the faith, hope and love of this Church, the people of St. Paul of the Cross Parish. May God be with us to guide us and bless us all.