

Dear Parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy Family,

Greetings and Peace of the Lord be with you!

In today's Gospel passage, we hear Jesus again predict His passion, death, and Resurrection to the disciples. The setting here is important. Jesus and His disciples are preparing to journey through Galilee, a Jewish territory in which Jesus had already encountered adverse problems with the Pharisees. He uses this occasion to teach His disciples what constitutes greatness in God's eyes. True greatness, Jesus says, does not come from having power and influences over people, but consists in humble and dedicated service to neighbor. Jesus tells His ambitious disciples that everyone is important and that greatness comes from being available to all people even down to little children. "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all."

Jesus then calls forward a child and teaches the Twelve that to receive a little child in His name is to receive both Jesus and the One who sent Him. We might easily fail to understand the profound significance of this event. In first-century Palestine, children were without status or power, possessing no legal rights. In this action, Jesus is teaching His disciples and us that when we serve the least ones among us, we serve Jesus Himself, and that those who would be first in God's kingdom must be servants for everyone whom God places on the pathways of their lives.

Being a Christian is a demanding honor because God's way of doing things is contrary to human expectations. Jesus tells us plainly that discipleship involves denying ourselves, taking up our cross each day with trust and confidence. We are called to follow Jesus' footsteps all the way to the end across the hill of Calvary. It's indeed a hard teaching, but the measure of greatness in the Kingdom of God is the standard of the cross that leads to the glory of the Resurrection.

In light of today's Gospel message, let us continue to pray and help each other lift up our crosses each day. I would also like to take this opportunity to first encourage participation in our 4th Annual "Mercy Super BUX" gathering and cash raffle to be held in the school auditorium on Sunday, September 29th after the 12Noon Mass. Please refer to the parish bulletin and website page for more details. Second, I wish to extend my sincere gratitude for your unwavering support, heartfelt prayers and encouragement during my time as pastor here at OLM. It has been a true honor, privilege and joy for me to serve with you, and for you, over these past seven years as we worked together to build up the Body of Christ here and beyond. I thank you for all the ways you showed me the Face of Christ in our parish mission as we shared our lives together, our faith, our gifts and talents and respective vocations to advance God's Kingdom of life and love here on earth as we journey together to His eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

May the Lord Jesus, our Good Shepherd, continue to especially bless and guide each one of you, your families and those dear to you, and our faith community with an abundance of His gifts of grace; and may Mary, the Mother of God, Our Lady of Mercy, keep you always under the mantle of her love, care and protection.

With my sincere gratitude and continued prayers, I truly remain yours in Christ,
Father John McCarthy