

## SEPTEMBER 10, 2017

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

READING 1 [EZ 33:7-9](#)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM [PS 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9](#)

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R. (8) **If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

READING 2 [ROM 13:8-10](#)

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Brothers and sisters: Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.

GOSPEL [MT 18:15-20](#)

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### HOMILY:

In 1687, Sir Isaac Newton published his renowned *Axiomata Sive Leges Motu*, "Axioms or Laws of Motion," three physical laws laying the foundations of classical mechanics, how forces act upon the body, and the motions produced. Sir Isaac Newton's First law of motion says in part: An object continues to move at a constant [velocity](#), unless acted upon by a [force](#). For example, I had the opportunity this summer to bicycle up to the top of the Road to the Sun in Glacier National Park. While it was a magnificent yet challenging climb, the most impressive part was the harrowing 20 mile descent off the glacial height. Fortunately, the force of my brake pads kept my bike from continuing on its natural path over the edge of cliffs and making me your [former](#) pastor! In that case, it was obvious that continuing in the natural course of my movement would have been bad. Force applied to the brakes redirected me into a much better direction!

Newton's First Law of Motion seems obvious when riding a bike. What about in the practice of our faith? I mentioned in the bulletin recently that we have decided to make a change of course regarding our recent practice of hosting a Fall Festival. While we could continue on the same course, a change seems necessary. What has forced a change in direction? **First**, over that last years, all parishes have experienced a decreased interest in events like a Fall Festival. I suppose we could attribute this change to changing tastes or just more competition for our leisure time (many more places to go for dinner and entertainment). **Second**, and related to the first, has been the increasingly difficult process of finding the large group of volunteers necessary to host a Fall Festival. Our Parish Life Committee, with my support, have chosen instead to host more frequent, less elaborate events that give opportunities to gather as a parish family, like last month's Parish Picnic, but do not require the same large number of volunteers all at once. **Third**, the changing state of our parish financial situation. While our parish heads towards its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020, our aging facilities need increased upkeep and attention. It is my obligation to attend to these changing needs and, when necessary, redirect our parish family's efforts. In the past, the funds raised by the Fall Festival have been dedicated to the upkeep of our parish. But, with increasing costs and decreasing proceeds from the Fall Festival, a change of course was necessary. Hence the transformation of the Fall Festival to the Annual Fall Appeal and Parish Chicken and Ham Dinner.

I have heard a couple comments (and I don't hear them all, of course!) expressing disappointment of this change of course. Certainly, there was much good in the history of the Fall Festival, many good folks generously serving their parish and much pleasure in the years gathering for food, crafts, games,

and other things. On one level, the loss of a Fall Festival could be seen as evidence of the loss of vitality of our parish community. I choose to see it, as a change of direction caused by the changing forces at work in our faith community and larger community and its changing needs. As followers of Jesus, we must always be ready to redirect our efforts to respond to what is now needed to be disciples of Jesus and lead others to him. When one effort begins to lose fruitfulness, it is actually a sign of vitality to redirect our efforts in another way, rather than remain in a state of slow decline. And a change of course is now necessary if we are to more fully live out our mission, to sustain and preserve a place where we and our children together grow in faith.

In recent conversations with our parish's Finance Council, they have counseled me to be very forthright telling you about the financial state of the parish and calling upon your generosity. This I am doing now. It is not sustainable to continue to draw from our quickly diminishing savings to provide for the sustaining of our parish facilities. The need is real and it is now. The primary focus of this year's **Giving Forward: Sustaining Our Parish Appeal** is our outdated lighting system in our church. The lighting was replaced over twenty years ago, with the *Rebuild My Church* effort. With changing technology, the system no longer controls well the lighting (perhaps you've noticed the "disco light" effect of the flickering when we attempt to turn on just some of the lights before and after Mass), leaving us, more and more, with the only option of always turning on ALL the lights, not cost effective option indeed. Further, new more efficient bulbs are not well controlled by the system. Finally, our building and grounds folks cannot guarantee that replacement parts can still be obtained for the outdated controls. Before we're all praying in the dark, we need to address this now.

The Appeal will end on October 8<sup>th</sup> with a Parish Chicken and Ham Dinner, beginning at 11 am. There is no charge for the meal except for whatever freewill offering you would like to make to further support your parish. While in the past, we have made a general invitation to others to come to this meal as part of our Fall Festival, this year guests are welcome, but only when you invite them individually. This is our chance to live our mission as an evangelizing community by making the effort to invite others into our faith family, especially those who may have ceased the practice of our Catholic faith or who have might be searching for a place to offer prayer and worship to God. This is our chance to offer the invitation to faith that many await.

You should have received a mailing like THIS ONE. Included in it is a letter explaining our Appeal and the nature of our need. Next is an envelope allowing you to support the sustaining of your parish facilities. In the name of your parish family, present and future, I call upon your sacrificial gift and invite you to prayerfully consider what might be sacrificed out of your limited resources to provide for your family of faith. As with each moment along the course of the history of followers of Jesus, we find ourselves at a crossroads. We will continue in our current path unless, in classic Newtonian fashion, we change course with an act of generosity for our parish family. It's one of those times to pump the brakes, change direction, and by the force of our charity and mercy to set our course more fully by giving forward to secure the future path of our parish.

St. Paul, the master of living the Christian life, says to us today: "Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another." Because of God's goodness to us, what we owe to one another is love in acts of generous self-sacrifice is the single true measure of a life of faith well-lived. Now is the time for a change of direction, to love more, to sacrifice more, and to give forward, so that others might live more fully through us. May our Lord make fruitful our sacrifices for the sake of his Kingdom.