

## Giving of ourselves to the church we love

1 Peter 2 (NRSVCE)

<sup>4</sup> Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and <sup>5</sup> like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For it stands in scripture:

“See, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious;  
and whoever believes in him<sup>[b]</sup> will not be put to shame.”

Raised in a non-practicing catholic family, my experience with Catholicism did not originate thru my parents, but instead came through the catholic school I was sent to in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Captivated by the architecture, the symbols, the statues, and rituals, my young

artist soul was immediately at home. As a teenager, the love of history only drew me in deeper as I studied the role and impact of the church throughout history. The origins that traced to Jesus and his apostles, the faith that continued after Jesus death, mostly operating in secrecy. The spread of the religion through ancient Rome and the emergence throughout the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The symbology, the saints, the rise in the middle ages, the knights, the cathedrals, and the renaissance. As a young man, my simplified view of our church, was through a highly romanticized prism. I understood the mission, a church set forth by Jesus through Saint Peter to foster a belief, an institution based on love and faith, with a passion

to care for people, delivering a message of hope, trying to make this world a better place. But I did not understand the cost, the effort it took to make that happen.

My young mind saw something so grand in scale, a beacon emitting from the cathedrals around the world, and the Vatican in Rome, surely that was enough to call out to everyone, to inspire.

Later, I came to see that my young journey through art and church history had brought me closer to Catholicism, but not necessarily closer to God.

Through time, and experience, the blinding shine emitting from our golden domes, and spires dimmed enough so I could come to see and understand the real church, the people, all of you. Above all things about religion I have come to learn is “church is local”. The real church is the parishioners doing God's work every day. From food pantries to youth

programs, from pre-school to adult education, it is the volunteers, church staff and clergy contributing daily to the benefit of others that make up the Catholic Church and our parish. Although I still draw inspiration from the many

churches and artwork created on behalf of our religion, I no longer look to those as a source of hope or comfort. For that I only need to look to those seated next to me on Sunday, or across from me at a stewardship meeting.

The love of each other, the beacon to inspire others starts with us. Who knows, maybe the goodness we emit will be so bright the Vatican will look to us for inspiration and decide to shine up the domes and spires with the good works of God. Blessings to you all.

Written by Stephen Waite, a member of our Stewardship Committee

