

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 28, 2019

Dear Friends,

Today I write to let you know that I have accepted the position of PA for Adult Evangelization at St Anthony's Parish in Renton which begins Monday, August 19.

It has been a sincere joy both serving and accompanying Visitation Parish as your PA for Faith Formation. I have had the pleasure of getting to know many of you – children, parents, catechists and more – through sacramental preparation and liturgical celebration. I am truly grateful! I have grown in the faith because of your faithful witness through the joys and sorrows of the past few years. I pray that as you continue growing and deepening your love for Christ and his church, so too will your response to others in missionary discipleship. I pray that you fervently *choose to will* that love for God and neighbor, which is humble and not proud, be your defining charism.

Our readings this Sunday remind us that all of creation is held in God's hands, and that we who have been baptized in Christ are to die to ourselves so we may live fully in Him. This is the *exitus reditus*, the "exit and return" that is life's breath of faithful trust in God. Saint Maximilian Kolbe names it the "surrender and return" for it is in surrendering to God that which we are and have that He is able to fulfill in us our longings and needs. To follow Jesus is to grow in relationship with the One who created us: a relationship of listening, discerning and trust. It is to say "*Thy will be done*" above our pleas for mercy and grace especially when facing the unknown. Many saints remind us that this is only possible by fixing our eyes on Jesus with regular daily prayer, meditating on scripture and availing of the sacraments of confession and Eucharist often. Like building cairns on mountains, this heroic virtue is built pebble-by-pebble: one small virtuous act a day, practice by practice until virtuous habit becomes the way of virtuous living. Decide today to fix your eyes on Jesus, rooting your actions in love for God and neighbor.

Visitation Parish is my first Catholic home and leaving is not easy. You are the community that received me when I made my profession of faith, was confirmed, and received the fullness of Jesus in the Eucharist for the first time. It is here that my husband and I were married at one of our last Saturday Vigil Masses. You are a member of Christ's mystical body – in both beauty and woundedness – that is very dear to my heart. I have been blessed to have been both nurtured by you since 2011 and then serve you in ministry since 2014. As Catholics, our desire for missionary discipleship needs to be both maturing and increasing! I strongly desire that you, my dear community of Visitation, know your significant part in my life's growth as I am now being called into the deep waters of another member of Christ's mystical body. I ask that you might join me in surrendering to God that which is His, so that His wondrous might and grace might be more fully received in our daily mission as disciples of Jesus.

In the Joy of the Risen Christ,

Kristen Abbananto

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