

GOD'S LOVE IS EVERLASTING

I am a visual person, inspired often by what I see. In my room every morning I look at the corpus of the crucified Savior from my first trip to Africa. It is not attached to a cross, because every day I know I must carry the cross with Him. In the bathroom are three pictures from three different golf courses. The first is a gorgeous shot of looking forward at the green with the flag surrounded by clouds in Waterville, Ireland. It is a reminder to make good decisions while looking forward to where you are going. The second is a picture of my golf bag on a famous bridge at St. Andrews in Scotland. It is to challenge me to stay in the moment, not consumed by looking forward or looking back, realizing that the present moment has a purpose. The third and final picture is of a shot of a par-three hole looking back from behind the green. It is looking back at where I had been on the course. It is from Bandon Dunes, Oregon. It is a calling to remember where I started. It is a look back to see where the journey has taken me, the hills I've climbed, and the hazards I may or may not have missed.

These three pictures are my visual reminder as to how I am to embrace the day open to God and His plan in my life. I am to look forward, stay present, and always reflect on the past to find wisdom. His plan brought me here nine years ago. Back then I looked forward to an opportunity to bring sacramental grace to you that was centered in the Eucharist. With the help of our dedicated staff, we marched together finding new ways to celebrate the Lord Jesus. The Triduum found renewal and the environment always changing, hopefully becoming a doorway to help us to focus. Volunteers blended vision with talent and the glory of God was praised.

The present found us on a very new and defining bridge. We had to live in a time of a pandemic. New committees had to be formed, and restrictions for safety became the loudest voice. In those moments, isolation and fear seemed to challenge the core of who we were called to become. Faith never left. God never abandoned us. All of you are a powerful testimony to that. Looking back at where we have come, I feel so blessed to have journeyed with you. From mission trips to the creation of a St. Vincent de Paul Society, from vibrant Parish Councils and Commissions to a great Reunite in Christ weekend, I have seen the fingerprint of God in all of it. Thank you for sharing so proudly the truth of Jesus Christ. Thank you for inspiring me to experience more profoundly the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Thank you for forgiving me for the times when I did not listen intently, the times when I got distracted or was abrupt. I am an imperfect vessel trying to humbly walk with the Lord and I mess that up from time to time.

St. Paul writes that there are three things that remain: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love. Know of my love for all of you and the profound impact you have had and will continue to have in my life.

As the journey continues, may it find us in prayer for one another,



Fr. John J. Ouper

HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT

Today our lives are invited into the love dynamic of the Most Holy Trinity. It is a union beyond description, a unity unparalleled and enfolded in mystery. In the profound wisdom of the Creator/Father, the Son came to save us with a divine sacrifice like no other. His promise lives on sparked by the Holy Spirit that prompts our minds and fills our hearts. On this Solemnity, we are to gaze into the mystery and allow the mystery to gaze back at us.

In the Second Reading today Paul in his Letter to the Romans speaks of hope. Hope does not disappoint. We all begin new projects with hope; every baseball and football season begins with hope. Every time I go out to golf, I start out with hope. Sometimes the hope is just to be able to find my ball. Yet hope seems to dissipate and reality sets in. Sports teams underachieve, golf balls go in the water, and we don't accomplish everything we hoped to do. Yet hope does not disappoint. How does that happen? We live in a world torn apart, polarized and divided. Gun violence, hatred, and battle lines are drawn up by the minute. The weapons of words fail to find the truth. Where is this hope? I see pain and destruction, suffering and hardship. How can hope prevail?

The answer is found in the next line Paul wrote. "...because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts." God is doing the pouring. His love is the power of hope. We are to invite this hope into our hearts and into our whole being. We are to trust the Holy Spirit so completely that we allow the love dynamic of the entire Most Holy Trinity to become the foundation of our lives. With this love, we can walk into this world, and even though we suffer, we know we will be given the endurance to embrace it as it is meant to be.

The impact of the Most Holy Trinity is found in the pouring of love into our hearts. It is realizing we are a vessel, a receptacle. Divine Love is longing to fill us. Love that is creative yet pained, insightful yet demanding. It is mysterious and cannot be controlled. Can we open ourselves to that kind of trust?

May this love be poured into us always,



Fr. John