

Fr. Luan Tran
Weekly Bulletin Notes
2018

December 30, 2018 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners

Christmas at St. Agatha's! Now that was an unforgettable event! This is especially true for this priest who has only been here since July! I was carried away by the deepest emotions when the whole church, with reverent and hushed singing voices prayed "Silent Night" to the organ music. This was even more poignant since I had told the story of the Christmas Truce of 1914, and how the Germans began to sing "Stille Nacht" to the great amazement of the British troops, and thereby began the miraculous ceasefire that would live on in the chronicles of military history!

I am so thankful to all of you - the staff of the parish, the Music Ministers, the Altar Society, the Altar Servers, the Lectors, the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, the Ushers, and everyone who was there, for contributing in an exceptional way to these Christmas Masses!

God is certainly with all of you!

December 23, 2018 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners

The memory of the First Christmas has been born by the Church down to our own time. The heart-warming account of the Virgin Birth of the Eternal Son of God is not just a charming story for children - we are all children, anyway! The Christmas story is true because it did happen one night in a cave in Bethlehem. But it is also true because the human heart is made for it, although it is inconceivable! Our hearts are indeed restless until they rest in God, as St. Augustine has stated. But now our hearts can truly rest, because God has come down among us and become visible. The resting is now possible! God bless you all this Christmas!

December 16, 2018 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners

Bishop Barron in his weekly homily for this Sunday, "Can someone be commanded to 'Rejoice'?" But that is exactly what St. Paul has commanded us to do on this Gaudete Sunday, "Rejoice!" And he immediately says a second time, "Again, I say, 'Rejoice!'" So, then, to be rejoicing is a Christian virtue - a Christian is someone who is always rejoicing - no matter what! No matter what? Certainly! Look at St. Paul! Shipwrecked, beaten, jailed, tortured, ridiculed, and betrayed: he had suffered all. And yet, in the midst of trials and tribulations, St. Paul was always rejoicing! He talks the talk because he has walked the walk! And St. Paul's secret? C.H.R.I.S.T!

Gaudete, you all!!!

December 9, 2018 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners

Pope Benedict, in a homily a long time ago, related a conversation he had had with a psychiatrist in Germany who was assisting people with deep clinical depression. The psychiatrist told him that if a patient could be helped to recall an act of human kindness in the past, then, chances were good that he would recover.

Advent is the time for us to recall the kindness of God in the mystery of the Incarnation in order to recover from the torpor of living. Advent reminds us of this great act of kindness of God who became a child in order to save us from a life of misery and a future of eternal wretchedness!

Advent reminds us of the reason why life is worth living and why, even in the midst of so much suffering, we still have reasons to hope! Confession is a most marvelous way to purify our memories and clarify the sense of our destiny! Prayer and fasting and almsgiving will also help to refresh our deepest longing for God!

Please don't let another Advent come and go with nothing to show for it! God bless you!

December 2, 2018 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners

Advent is once more upon us. We have only four weeks to prepare for Christmas, and, before you know it, the whole joyful season will be over! What could we do so that not another Advent would come and go and we remain the same - unchanged? We are too absorbed in our work, our tasks, and our jobs. We barely have time to breathe, and life goes on from morning till evening without break for us. God has graced us with another Advent season! And He wants us to truly take time out for Him from our busy schedule, to slow down, to take in the taste and the smell and the flavor of the season, so that we may make the most of this beautiful season as we prepare for Christmas.

Please join me and others at Vespers these Sundays of Advent. We have sung Vespers at 5pm every Sunday. And on the First Sunday of Advent we will have a reflection during Vespers to help us reflect on the graciousness of God in the event of the Incarnation. We will have a potluck dinner afterwards. So, there is my invitation to you, so that we could be together one more time on a Sunday Advent evening to praise God and to be with each other!

November 25, 2018 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

A question for us: Is Christ truly the King of our life? Do I accept His sovereign kingship and put myself under His dominion? Do I accept His commandments and teachings? Do I willingly live my life morally as a response to His Love for me?

I have discovered for myself this existential truth: if I refuse to acknowledge Christ's kingship over my life in even a smallest matter, if I assert my autonomy and dismiss Him, somehow life is not going well for me. Without Him as my King and Lord, anchor and guide, I meander and I stray and I get lost or become entangled in all the things that make life miserable for me. Without Christ, life has no meaning and purpose! Without Christ, I don't even want to get up on Monday morning! But with Christ I have everything. With Christ, I could put one foot in front of the other and keep on keeping on! And what else? On Thanksgiving Day, I have someone to whom I could be thankful! God bless you!

November 18, 2018 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

Thanksgiving is this coming week and thousands of people in Northern and Southern California have no place to celebrate this beautiful feast with their families. This Thursday, when you sit down with your families to thank God for the blessings you have all received, please take a moment to think and pray for all the people displaced by the vicious fires which have consumed so many lives and properties and wrought havoc on so many lives! Please help them, if you can, through the Red Cross or any other charitable organizations. I wish you a most Blessed Thanksgiving!

November 11, 2018 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

The Archbishop is inviting input from priests and people, in planning for the future of the Archdiocese. I am asking the question for myself: Is our parish viable? And viability means, but not limited to: Are we reaching out to other people? Are we evangelizing the culture? Are we attracting people from the neighborhood because of the way we live our faith? Are we actively engaging those who might have different ideas about freedom of conscience, the free exercise of religion, and such, in conversations? Are we giving witness to what we believe? Are we ourselves solidly rooted in our faith and in our love and in our hope - the three Theological virtues? But the most essential question is, are we truly in love with God? If our hearts are on fire for God, then, of course, we will do all those things above. And so the heart is where everything must begin. Is my heart filled with affection for Jesus? Do I truly prefer Christ above all other people and things and even my own life?

May we never cease to beg the Lord for affection for Him! "Seek first the Kingdom of God, then all else shall be given thee!"

November 4, 2018 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

The one word that describes All Saints Day is joy. Today the Church invites us to look up to heaven and remember those faithful departed who lived their lives faithfully in the eye of God and who were pleasing to Him by the fragrance of the virtuous deeds and words and thoughts. The saints persevered while their faith was being tested - sometimes in the most violent ways. In their perseverance the saints built up Christ's Body on earth. They resisted the onslaughts of evil with God's graces. They obeyed the Commandments out of love for God. Many of them made the ultimate sacrifices rather than abandoned the faith. The saints give us great examples. From heaven, they remind us that it is very possible to be saints - even in this day and age! They show us that true joy is found when we live out our commitment to God in fidelity. They help us discover the joy of the pearl of great price - God's wisdom and His precepts. They continue to intercede for us with God in heaven so that the joy of being a Christian continues to permeate our whole being - even while we suffer hardships and illnesses.

Please also pray for all those still awaiting for the day when their purification shall be completed. Please never forget those in the suffering Church in Purgatory who need our prayers and works of penance for their ultimate entrance into God's Presence in heaven! Fr. Luan

October 28, 2018 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners

This week I will read the letter to our Parish from the Archbishop. The Church is not advocating any other measures on the ballot this November in Oregon, except for Measure 106 as this measure directly impacts us Catholics for it has to do with public funding of abortion. Now is the chance for us to put our faith into action, but in the end we all vote with our conscience. I hope and pray that we shall be guided by an informed conscience that has been formed and shaped by the message of the Gospel of Life. We Christians are the light and salt of the world. May our good God continue to keep our faith firm and fervent, our hope serene and strong, and our charity for Him and for the world, burning with the fire of every affection in the heart!

October 21, 2018 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners

“The Son of man also came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (10:45) It is very clear from the Gospel this Sunday that, if we are to be Christ's disciples, we must be willing to follow Him in serving others, in putting the welfare of others' ahead of ours, in washing the feet of those whom God has sent us. The scandals in the Church are the direct result of the forgetfulness of those who no longer remembered why they had become priests in the first place. As I have been reflecting on the Gospel for my homily, I am also thinking of my own vocation. I cannot but shudder to think that "there but for the grace of God, go I!" It is so easy to lose the original ideals and desires and purposes as one is making his way through life. Between what is good for my soul and what makes me look good, there is but a thin line. Please pray for me and for all priests that we have only one ambition in life: to serve as Christ has served!

October 14, 2018 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

As some of you might have known, my mother had a stroke a month ago. She was brought to Providence as soon as my brother found out. But it was too late for the doctors to do anything useful. So for 24 hours we kept vigil with her. And during the whole time, I kept begging the Blessed Mother to ask her Son to be merciful to my poor mother. Meanwhile, countless Memorares were being poured out on her behalf. Miraculously, she began to improve in the morning - solely on the grace of God and on the Blessed Mother's intercessions! I could never say enough about the power and efficacy of the Memorare in times of desperate needs! I could never say enough about the attentiveness of our good God, who knows every detail of my life and who cares for me from moment to moment as nobody can. I could never say enough about the solidarity and the companionship of people like you as we were waiting by her bedside for many days. I remember once again that I don't pray because I have run out of options. Prayers come before all else. Then I can deal with anything - and anything is possible with God! Again, everything that God allows to happen to me is for my maturation. My poor mother still has a long way to go, but once again, I am reminded how my Faith is being verified right in front of me in my life now. I am very grateful to the staff of St. Agatha - Karen and Suzy! I am grateful to all of you for praying for my mother! May God reward you all abundantly!

October 7, 2018 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

The month of October has been designated Respect Life Month by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Please reflect on the following statement by the USCCB and pray for the victory of the Culture of Life in this country and around the world.

"In 1531, when the indigenous peoples of Mexico were subjugated and the practice of human sacrifice was still a recent memory, the Mother of God appeared to St. Juan Diego as a pregnant native woman, now known as Our Lady of Guadalupe. She sent him with miraculous flowers in his cloak to tell the bishop to build a church where people could receive her Son and her loving, tender care. When St. Juan Diego opened the cloak before the bishop, an image of Our Lady was revealed that remains to this day. The chapel was quickly built, millions embraced Christianity, and the Church increased its protection of the indigenous peoples. By embracing the mission entrusted to him, St. Juan Diego helped bring Christ's transforming love to cultures gripped by oppression and death.

Today, we again see the dignity of human life disregarded. Unborn children are destroyed through abortion, and ill people are encouraged and assisted to take their own lives. How do we respond? The essence of our identity is that we are created in God's image and likeness and loved by Him. Nothing can diminish the priceless worth of any human life. Every person is cherished. God creates every person for eternal union with Himself and continually invites us to embrace a loving relationship with Him. Every person is chosen. We are called to be messengers of God's love, treating one another as cherished and chosen by Him. In doing so, we help build a culture that respects all human life. Every person is sent.

Like St. Juan Diego, let us embrace our daily mission to help others encounter God's transforming, life-giving love."

September 30, 2018 Bulletin:

This week I will read the letter to our Parish from the Archbishop. The Church is not advocating any other measures on the ballot this November in Oregon, except for Measure 106 as this measure directly impacts us Catholics for it has to do with public funding of abortion. Now is the chance for us to put our faith into action, but in the end we all vote with our conscience. I hope and pray that we shall be guided by an informed conscience that has been formed and shaped by the message of the Gospel of Life. We Christians are the light and salt of the world.

May our good God continue to keep our faith firm and fervent, our hope serene and strong, and our charity for Him and for the world, burning with the fire of every affection in the heart!

From September 23, 2018 Bulletin:

Prayers are the most powerful weapon against despair and hopelessness. We know we don't change God's mind when we pray. Instead, we are the ones that get changed. Prayers calm us

down and help us realize the true nature of the situation, so that our perceptions become aligned with reality. And the reality is that everything that is happening to us happens for our maturation - by God's design and out of His infinite affection for us. Prayers help us realize God is present and is aware of our total dependence on Him in the hour of need. We can then turn over everything to Him. We can then take a breather and make the next step. The following prayer is most amazing the "Memorare!"

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

September 16, 2018 Bulletin:

"The Son of man also came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."
(10:45)

It is very clear from the Gospel this Sunday that, if we are to be Christ's disciples, we must be willing to follow Him in serving others, in putting the welfare of others' ahead of ours, in washing the feet of those whom God has sent us. The scandals in the Church are the direct result of the forgetfulness of those who no longer remembered why they had become priests in the first place. As I have been reflecting on the Gospel for my homily, I am also thinking of my own vocation.

I cannot but shudder to think that "there but for the grace of God, go I!" It is so easy to lose the original ideals and desires and purposes as one is making his way through life. Between what is good for my soul and what makes me look good, there is but a thin line. Please pray for me and for all priests that we have only one ambition in life: to serve as Christ has served!

September 9, 2018 Bulletin:

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14

When I see children at Mass, when I hear them crying or talking or making a fuss, my heart rejoices because Jesus loves to see children at His Holy Mass! And I love to have them close to Jesus who comes on the altar during Consecration! I imagine Jesus our Lord in the Host elevated aloft the altar and in the Precious Blood in the Chalice held suspended over the altar smiling at the little ones! Please don't keep the children away from the Holy Mass! They might not understand everything, but it does not matter, because, ultimately, the Holy Mass is a Mystery, and what do we adults really know about the Mass? But the innocence, and the sincerity, and the openness of the hearts of these children dispose them to receive the Divine Presence radiating from the altar unto the young souls! Please don't keep the children away from Jesus during Holy Mass! Fr. Luan Tran

From September 2, 2018 Bulletin:

Bishop Robert Barron, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, has issued a clarion call to Catholics in his most recent podcast: please stay in the Church to fight for the Church! I absolutely agree with him.

We are not the product of our times. In fact, God has made us for this time in history, according to Bishop Barron. It is incumbent upon us to accept the challenges of these times and remain steadfast in the Church – to fight for the Church! For me, the first thing to be fighting against for the sake of the Church is myself! My laziness, my mediocrity, my selfishness, my lack of fear of the Lord, my complacency, my natural inclination to seek the easy way out, my pleasures, my comforts: these must be fought with every fiber of my being (with God's grace, of course!), so that I myself could be part of the new conversion in the Church which must be happening again now. Yes, acts of Penance, Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament, frequent confessions, daily prayers, and helping the poor! The status quo cannot remain, I must be converted again!

There is so much more to do and to say, but I will always start with myself in this new effort of gaining back the credibility for the Church, of winning souls and hearts for Christ, of truly evangelizing a world that has turned old and worn out, because of sins and other human failures. So, I for my part will stay in the Church to fight for the Church, but that fight begins with myself, Father Luan!

From August 26, 2018 Bulletin

Last Sunday I got up in the morning and was inspired by the Holy Spirit to do something I hadn't planned to do: to add to my homily a plea for help for a family of 8 who had just recently been accepted into our school. I asked for help with the uniforms for the four children and some financial assistance for the school tuition. To date, we have received \$2,400! I am truly surprised by your quick response! I am edified by your generosity. I am grateful for everything! I firmly believe that the parish and the school will flourish together - and not apart or separate from each other.

This is my first pastorate with a school attached, and I am more and more aware of the awesome responsibility that has been entrusted to me by the Archbishop. Reflecting on the coming new school year, I don't believe we could attract new families to our parish and our school simply with clever soundbites and slogans. Programs and plans have their places, of course. Good solid academic excellence is a must. So is a strong Catholic identity. But there is one thing that is absolutely indispensable: Prayers! I myself have not stopped praying for our school - for more students, for faith-filled staff and teachers, for more joy and happiness among the families, for stronger bonds between the parish and the school, for many more years of faithful service to God and the Church by the people of St. Agatha's Church and School!

You are the people God has put on the path to evangelize and convert this part of His creation! I thank you!

From August 19, 2018 Bulletin

We are gearing up for a new school year, and I am excited in front of this enormous challenge. I am excited for the opportunities to get to know St. Agatha's school families. I am looking forward to meeting the parents when they drop off their children in the morning for school. And I am grateful for our principal, Mr. Harris, and for the teachers and the staff, and the volunteers. Our school is truly the greatest and effective way to evangelize the culture; and it is an enormous opportunity for all of us at St. Agatha's to be involved and engaged. This is my first assignment with a school and I am grateful to the Archbishop to have enough confidence in me in entrusting me with this great responsibility. I know the learning curve is very steep for me, but I am willing - because there is no other way but to trust in God and push forward!

The recent changes in the church have been difficult and bewildering for you, I know. I am truly sorry if any of those changes disturbs you and make your experience at Holy Mass difficult. I ask for your forgiveness! I have no agenda nor do I try to push through an ideology of my own with these changes. I sincerely and genuinely want and desire one thing and one thing only: that all of us be able to encounter Christ at Sunday Mass, and that we all go home nourished and strengthened by the grace we receive, and by the friendship we share here. Please speak to me directly and tell me what you want me to hear. The least I could do is to give you the time of day, to show you the respect you deserve, and to pray for you! God bless you!

Fr. Luan Tran August 12, 2018 Bulletin

Today, August 8, Mr. Harris and I attended a meeting at the chancery for new pastors of parishes with a school. There are so many things to come up to speed on in a very short amount of time. I am not sure any priest in my situation would feel adequate to the task, unless he puts everything in God's hand.

But I already started my work here with a prayer to the Blessed Mother and our Blessed Lord so that my cares and concerns for the parish may not diminish my sense of gratitude to God for having sent me here. Also, I have decided that every time I begin to worry about the parish and the school, I shall stop and pray a Memorare instead! "Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone . . ." I am fully convinced that, if God has entrusted with this task of being the pastor of this wonderful parish and this excellent school, then He will endow me with all the graces necessary to stay on the mission! I can say now that I am glad this parish has a school so that we have a concrete place for our evangelizing mission. I am glad that St. Agatha has a place into which we could channel our energy and enthusiasm and efforts so that the faith could be handed on and saints could be formed! Yes, the primary goal of a Catholic school is to form future saints. Please help me in this most worthy endeavors!

July 29 Bulletin

I am so sorry about the heat wave that has made the experience at Holy Mass at St. Agatha's so uncomfortable. The ceiling fans help, but it is still hot and humid in the church. I will do what I can to help you survive the heat, especially by begging our Lord for some relief. I have to say I

am very edified that you have not stayed away from the Mass here, and have shared with all of us in the burden of this awful heat! Please consider offering your physical discomfort to our Blessed Lord during Holy Mass for the welfare of your loved ones.

In the past several days, I have had the privilege of speaking and listening to some of you about your concerns, in complete openness, and sincerity, and charity. I appreciate greatly their candor and honesty. I invite you to speak with me directly if there is something that bothers you, so that I could understand your experience in your own words. And for me to explain the reasons and the intentions.

I am still very far away from perfection, because I am nothing but a sinner on the way to salvation. And the way I save my soul now is by being a faithful priest in serving God by serving you at St. Agatha's. Nothing I do is meant to draw attention to myself, but is supposed to be for the Greater Glory of God and the Church. Please let me know when and where I fall short of that goal. Know that pray for you and your families without ceasing. Fr Luan Tran

July 22 Bulletin

Three weeks in and I am feeling at home! Praise God! Deo Gratias! So much to learn, and so little time, but so far so good! The staff, the volunteers, the parishioners: all of you have offered me the handshake of fellowship and have extended to me your warmest welcome! I hope I will not disappoint you, God willing and God assisting! This morning at coffee with some from the daily Mass crowd, I was sharing my amazement and my appreciation of the tremendous potential and the many opportunities at St. Agatha. But my greatest astounding discovery is how willing our volunteers are in going the extra mile for the Church, the parish, the priest, and each other! Without all of you working together, the church would have gone in a different direction altogether! Please don't hesitate to share your thoughts with me, your priest. I am here to serve you at the pleasure of our Lord and of the Archbishop. And both our Blessed Lord and the Archbishop want me to put one hundred percent of me into my apostolate here, without asking "what is in it for me?" Please also forgive whatever grievances or inconveniences I have caused you because of my style or personality or even my accent! May God keep all of us together in His service!

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