

11/18 Letter fro Father Bert

IMPORTANT BREAKING NEWS

I will lift my eyes to the mountains,
From where shall come my help?
My help shall come from the Lord!
So I'll walk in the light of the path set before me,
For I know my God will show me the way.

When I arrived here at the Church of St. Cecilia nearly four and a half years ago, I never suspected that I would be sharing the news I have to share with you today so soon. After nearly eleven years pastoring the great people of St. Maurice Parish, I knew that God was calling me to walk a different path. After many months of discernment and discussion with my spiritual director and our Bishop, I sadly, but confidently said goodbye to many fellow disciples whom I had come to love.

At that time, I was offered the opportunity to become the Pastor of three different parishes. I grappled with the various possibilities and believe with all my heart that I followed the Lord's call to come here...to this wonderful and challenging community of the Church of St. Cecilia. It wasn't easy! But, is anything of great worth ever easy!

The unknown at the beginning of our relationship was challenging to me. You changed me and made me grow. Together, we have become the welcoming, active, loving and servant disciples our God calls us to be. We are Church. We are alive. We worship with passion and, together, we answer the Lord's mandate to reach out and minister to the most needy and vulnerable in our midst. I am so pleased and proud of what we, as Church, have become and I am confident that even greater spiritual growth lies ahead.

However, my Dad, Al, whom many of you have met and embraced, is 86, and his health is diminishing rapidly. I am uncertain how many years he has left with us, and he is alone, and lonely. My older sister lives in New Hampshire and is able to see him about once a month. My younger sister moved to North Caroline last April. That leaves me to attend to this man who gave me life, gave me agita and gave me this fiery Italian temperament!

He is no longer able to be alone. He was very smart and responsible in his younger years, so as a result of purchasing Long Term Health Care, he benefits greatly from the companionship and help his aide affords him four days a week. However, it is not enough. I can no longer accept the fact that his final years will be spent without more consistent, direct involvement in his daily life. Realistically, this is impossible with me being here in Stamford. While it is only a mere 22 miles away, as any of you who traverse the Merritt parkway or I-95 know, on many daysit might as well be a hundred or more miles away!

Sadly, I have come to the realization that I can no longer effectively minister to the great people of the Church of St. Cecilia and be the son and caretaker my Dad deserves. This breaks my heart. I have no desire to leave you, yet, I cannot stay.

After many discussions with Bishop Frank, I have been named the Pastor of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Stratford...less than ten minutes from where my Dad lives and I grew up. I am relieved of the guilt of not being able to be present to my Dad. I am grateful for the pastoral sensitivity of our Bishop. I have and will continue to shed many tears because this means I must leave you...for that, I am sorry.

A temporary administrator will be named to shepherd this community very soon. I will be here until November 30th and take up the Pastorate at Holy Name on December 1st...the first Sunday of Advent and the beginning of a new Church Year.

I will hold you in my heart with love and gratitude forever. You have made me a better priest, a better man and a better disciple. Thank You. Always remember, and never forget, we must ALL walk in the light of the path set before us AND our God will certainly guide and protect us and...show us the way.

May God Bless you, always. Fr. Bert

11/26/18 Letter from Father Bert

My Final Reflection and Parting Words to the faith-filled community of the Church of St. Cecilia, Stamford.

I'd like to offer a short reflection on today's Feast and share some parting words with you as I prepare to move to my next assignment as Pastor of Holy Name of Jesus, Stratford, later this week.

Christ, our Lord and King is the NORM for our life.

I can just imagine Pilate being totally thrown by the conversation we heard in today's Gospel...

Pilate: Are you a King?

Jesus: My kingdom does not belong to this world.

Pilate: Then you are a King?

Jesus: You say that I am...I came to testify to the truth...

Pilate's response to this odd exchange-not part of the reading today- is the all important question

Pilate: What is truth?

Now, what's coming next is pure conjecture on my part, however we are party to the fact that Pilate was very 'conflicted' about what to do with the man before him...in fact, in Matthew's Gospel Pilate's wife sends word to him to have nothing to do with that man!

I believe Pilate had to have seen Jesus as a bit of a nut case...a tad weird...NOT a normal person!

Pilate wanted to release him...if Jesus had just played along he could have probably avoided all that was about to happen...but NOOOO he had to go and be abnormal!!!

My parting words and hopes for all of us is that we, like our Lord and King, will never be afraid to be seen as abnormal...weird...crazy in the eyes of the world!

NORMAL- which, by the way means acting according to a NORM ...NORMAL for us as disciples of Jesus Christ is not the same NORMAL that much of the world or society upholds and proclaims.

WE ARE CALLED TO BE DIFFERENT...TO BE ABNORMAL...

TO LIVE AND MAKE OUR OWN THE NORMS OUR LORD ESTABLISHED FOR THOSE WHO WOULD BE HIS FOLLOWERS AND DISCIPLES.

These norms and their importance are the bedrock of who we are and who we profess to be and are what make us NORMAL in the eyes of our God.

I'll briefly share with you three ways by which we can know that we are indeed NORMAL IN GOD'S EYES.

ONE FROM SCRIPTURE

ONE FROM ST. THERESA OF CALCUTTA

AND ONE...FROM MY Mom!

SCRIPTURE: We will be abnormal in the eyes of the world but NORMAL in God's eyes if we dedicate all that we are and all that we do to

Loving God with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength and all our mind AND loving our neighbor

The following was found written in one of the room's in an orphanage run by MOTHER THERESA in Calcutta, India

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered.

Forgive them and love them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you.

Be honest and sincere anyway.

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous.

Always Be joyful anyway.

The good you do today, will often be forgotten.

Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, even though it may never be enough.

Give your best anyway.

Do all of this and you will be seen as ABNORMAL in the eyes of the world. BUT NORMAL in God's eye.

And now, as you've heard me talk about before, from my Mom, who reminded me of this every time I would leave the house...

REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE.

In closing, I want to repeat part of my message to you from last week...

I will hold you in my heart with love and gratitude forever. You have made me a better priest, a better man and a better disciple. Thank You. Always remember, and never forget, we must ALL walk in the light of the path set before us AND our God will certainly guide and protect us and...show us the way.

May our Patroness, St. Cecilia guide and inspire you to sing God's praises at all times

May the Holy Spirit empower you to do great things with great love.

May the mercy and mandate of our Lord and King Jesus REIGN in your hearts and give you the strength to build and foster His Kingdom through your daily encounters with others and your service to the needy and vulnerable in our midst.

May our good and gracious God fill you with abundant blessings, love and peace.

I Love you. Thank-You...and Good-Bye. AMEN.