

**JUNE 17, 2018**

**Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Reading 1** [EZ 17:22-24](#)

**Responsorial Psalm** [PS 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16](#)

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R. (cf. 2a) **Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.**

**Reading 2** [2 COR 5:6-10](#)

**Gospel** [MK 4:26-34](#)

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Jesus said to the crowds: "This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and through it all the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how. Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come." He said, "To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it? It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade." With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to understand it. Without parables he did not speak to them, but to his own disciples he explained everything in private.

**HOMILY:**

In June 1944 in the midst of those most fearful and uncertain days of World War II, as the Allied troops were storming the beaches of Normandy France and, with great cost, began the liberation of Europe, on the home front, in Iowa, the priests of our Archdiocese gathered that month in Dubuque for their annual retreat, where most certainly prayers for our soldiers and an end to war were offered with great conviction. At some point during the retreat, the then Archbishop Francis Beckman requested a meeting with Fr. John Fisher, then pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Sumner IA. The Archbishop's concern: the growth of Waterloo during the War, and the need for a new church in what he called "the West Side of Waterloo." About a month later, the Archbishop, in one of the last acts of his tenure as Archbishop, wrote Fr. Fisher about the meeting: "I am writing to confirm our conversation during Retreat in June concerning the starting of a new parish on the West Side of Waterloo. You may start looking around for a proper location and possibly find a Protestant church building which could be acquired for temporary use." Within a week, a new coadjutor Archbishop had been appointed, Archbishop Henry P. Rohlman, who confirmed the appointment of Fr. Fisher as founding pastor of this new parish, which was formally erected as St. Edward Church early in 1945. The first Mass of parishioners celebrated in the auditorium of the Kingsley School on Palm Sunday, March 25, 1945. Records from the Masses on this Palm Sunday indicate: "The total attendance at the two Masses was approximately 65 families with 180 member parishioners, and for the record the offertory collection was \$92.50."

73 years later, we can look back and see how much has changed from that small yet mighty band of founders of our parish. The same strong faith that inspired our founders endures in our midst, though the contours and needs of our parish family have changed. And as our founders looked to the future with faith and hope, not knowing where their sacrifices might lead, so too we, on the verge of our parish's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2020, are obliged to look forward to prepare our parish, to the best of our vision, for generations to come.

It is my intention to speak to you over the next three weeks about an exciting initiative that began nearly two years ago with the prayerful discussions of our parish's Pastoral Council who, with the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the parish in mind, sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit regarding our parish mission at this point in the history of our church and parish, and then considered how we might observe the Anniversary celebration. The first fruit of that prayerful consideration of the Pastoral Council was the expression of the

parish mission about which we have been praying at each Sunday Mass since: “to be an evangelizing community by faith, with love, in hope.” This mission of evangelization, to share the Gospel message, to which our most recent Popes have been calling us since the Second Vatican Council in the 1960’s, is a significant shift of focus, calling us to look out from our parish building and property, to our mission to call and gather others into the Body of Christ, the joyful Redeemed of the Lord. At the same time, the Pastoral Council considered an initiative that had been studied over twenty years ago, when the “Rebuild My Church” project provided an interior renovation of our church. At that time, the possibility of adding an expanded “gathering space” in the vestibule area of our church was considered, but funding was not available to accomplish both of these projects at the same time. After more prayerful consideration, the Council reached consensus in the Spring of 2017 about the concept of constructing an expanded gathering space for our parish church. After the formulation of a Rationale Statement for the project and the working of an *ad hoc* committee of the Pastoral Council with a local architect, an architectural concept has been completed which will be the focus of the next stage of our consideration of this project for our parish family.

Next week, I will speak more specifically to the rationale for such a project, including the perceived needs that this effort would address; and then in two weeks, I will outline how we might expect this project to proceed, God willing, to its completion. I know that there will be many questions and suggestions from our parish family. I ask you to give yourself a chance to hear fully the rationale and plan, after which there will be ample opportunities to explore this concept more closely, as we move from “concept” to realization.

This last March, our Pastoral Council engaged in a prayerful process, to designate a name for this project. After the discussion, the Council chose “Gathered in Your Name” as the name for this project. “Gathered in Your Name” reminds us that the assembly of St. Edward Parish is a gathering in the name of the Lord, who, as he promised, is present whenever we gather in his name. As you will hear in the discussion of the rationale of “Gathered in Your Name,” our architecture is about more than “bricks and mortar.” Architecture reflects values, and, considering our parish mission, the high value of gathering our parish family must be reflected in our church building. More about the specifics in the next two weeks. Stay tuned!

In the meantime, we are given a most poignant and appropriate gospel reading as our parish continues its prayerful consideration of how we are “Gathered in Your Name.” Jesus, speaking not just to his disciples but to his future disciples, “the crowds,” tells them: “This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and through it all the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how. Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come.” We do not yet know the fruits that “Gathered in Your Name” will yield, or how that will happen, nor can we tell the effects that it will have on generations to come. Yet, it is our Christian obligation in faith to scatter the seed, water and tend it, trusting that it will grow of its own accord. For we who are people of faith know that the growth of the kingdom of God requires our efforts and sacrifices, but the fruit will be produced only by the grace of God that here is given in abundance in the Eucharist.

As pastor, I invite the parish family to advance towards the celebration of its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the same faith, hope, and love that has been in evident since Archbishop Beckman heard the needs of the Catholics of Waterloo and appointed Fr. Fisher to lead the founding families of our parish who first gathered in Kingsley School in providing a legacy which we are now called to share with future generations. May God’s Holy Spirit also guide our parish today in preparing for the future. For, when we follow the Spirit’s guidance, we are confident that our efforts and sacrifices will bear rich fruit for the Kingdom of God.