

July 21 and 28, 2019

Pastor's Corner

Being a Witness to Joy

Our Parish Staff attended a day of prayer and reflection at the Archdiocese Retreat Center in Metairie on June 12. The theme of the day was "Witness to Joy." There was Mass, quiet reflection time and three presentations by Dr. Tom Neal, a Theology Professor at Notre Dame Seminary. It was a very blessed day in which our staff felt spiritually uplifted. I share with you some of the highlights of what Dr. Neal presented on the theme of joy.

First Talk: Experiencing the Joy of the Gospel: Jesus is the Master of Joy. Our mission as his followers is to live the joy of Jesus and bring joy into our world. We must choose joy daily. Mother Teresa's charge to her sisters was, "Choose joy every day or you can't be a missionary of Christ." Joy comes from deep confidence and trust in Jesus: no matter what trial is going on in our lives or our world, trusting that Jesus is present and working in our midst leads us to joy. The Letter of James (James 1:2) says to consider trials as pure joy because they produce perseverance. Joy is the barometer of our healthiness. We are to be witnesses of joy everywhere, including in our workplace.

Second Talk: Obstacles to Joy: Dr. Neal set out an expansive list of joy-killers which I have summarized on page 4 of this bulletin. Our staff laughed as we heard the list and had to confess "guilt" to allowing many things on this list to rob us of our joy. The list of obstacles to joy is well worth reflecting about. I hope you take time to pray with it.

Third Talk: Cultivating a Witness to Joy: Dr. Neal began his third presentation by playing the pop music video, "Happy," by Pharrell Williams. That got us all moving and smiling. If you haven't seen the video, I urge you to google it. We learned that if you want to "be" happy, you need to "do" happy: smile, laugh, sing, dance, etc. *Be intentional about acts of joy.*

Dr. Neal said God gave the Sabbath Day to our world as a day to "be" and not to "do" – a day when we can reconnect with God, and God can renew and restore our energy and our joy. The Church actually is God's answer to need and suffering in our world and leads us to the joy of salvation. "We are pencils in the hand of God as God writes the story of our world," said Mother Teresa.

Through prayer, reflection and doing acts of joy, we will become joyful and be Jesus' witnesses joyful in this world. Have a joyful couple of weeks!

God bless,
Fr. Joe