

# From Fr. Martin Bourke November 18, 20108



## “Having a Long Tail”

Many years ago while I was attending Yonsei University in Seoul the Professor of the Course was a very gentle older woman. One of the students walked in late to the classroom and left the door open. After he was seated the Professor kindly spoke to the young man. “You must have a long tail” meaning that he had left the door open because his tail was still in transit through the door!!! We enjoyed her humor.

As I transition from my previous assignments and come to Tacoma, Visitation and Holy Rosary parishes I feel that I have a “long tail.” It has taken quite a while to say farewell to my past and prepare myself for my time here. So then I ask for your patience while my tail arrives!

Allow me to say that Deacon Jim has made every effort to make my transition easy and to get me up to speed on the situation here. The temptation is to bring my own presuppositions to this assignment, but I must put those aside in order to accept the story of these two parishes. Just as people have personality, so parishes too have their own style and approach to living out the gospel of Jesus.

There are a variety of spiritualities. If you doubt that then just look at the variety of Religious Orders in the church, each having its own Charism.

As parishioners it is not recommended or even suggested that you have to follow all methods of prayer as proposed by so many Orders, rather it seems reasonable to pick one and stay with it if you find it helpful in being the Christian that you might be.

Transitions present opportunities and challenges. An example of such might be what took place some time ago in Austria. Road crews there were trying out some new signs with mixed results.

Apparently the gender equality movement had arrived and so road staff were removing signs with male figures and replacing them with female ones. In Vienna signs which had the traditional man in pants and helmet showing construction work were being replaced by a long haired woman wearing rugged-looking boots, a skirt, and hefting a shovel. You might imagine that there have been some interesting comments.

I refuse to get into the discussion of gender equality, but transitions can be challenging and indeed a little painful for all concerned.

On the other side of the coin there is much opportunity with change. A priest gets a chance to remake himself and do better in the new parish. In addition the people have a chance to let go of any issues and start over in a new beginning.

During this time I have one request of you all and indeed of myself to follow the advice of John of the Cross the mystic who said “stay close to the fire.” For us Catholics everything begins and ends with Jesus. We find Jesus in the most complete way in the Mass. So go to Mass and yes “stay close to the fire.”

*Father Martin*

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