

Archbishop Sample's Pastoral Visit

Dear brothers & sisters in Christ,

This week at Holy Trinity and St. John's parishes we had the honor and pleasure of receiving Archbishop Alexander Sample during his pastoral visit to the South Coast. I would like to highlight his visit and recap some key points he shared with us, both in his homily and during the discussion we had with him in the parish hall after Mass on Friday, the feast of Saints Joachim and Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In his homily, Archbishop Sample first expressed his joy at being here with us on his first pastoral visit to Holy Trinity. Saints Joachim and Anne, grandparents of our Lord, remind us of the important role grandparents play in the lives of children. They are often the ones that pass the faith on to them and nurture it to fruition. Their faith and wisdom help them to be spiritual leaders of the family. The gospel parable of the sower mentions a lack of roots as a cause for lack of faith. Our grandparents are like roots that keep our families grounded. For grandparents and for all of us, confidently living our faith has an impact on others, causing a ripple effect. The archbishop recounted an experience he had as a new priest of doing his best to encourage a young college student to consider the truth of the Catholic faith and not to give up on it. Amazingly, twelve years later he encountered this man in Home Depot with his wife and two children. He was a happy, committed Catholic whose wife had gone through RCIA and whose children were being raised in the faith. This is an example of the ripple effect our actions can have when we place them in the Lord's hands. Let us pray for the grace to always go through the doors of opportunity to witness to our faith when they present themselves in our daily lives.

After Mass in the parish hall, those in attendance heard Archbishop Sample speak about his personal journey as a bishop; that as a newly-ordained priest he had the heart of a pastor whose joy was spending his life for the people in his care. Now, years after his appointment to the office of bishop and change in the nature of his duties, he has discovered in himself a longing to return to a more pastoral approach to his ministry. To this end, he has made a plan to visit the seven regions of the Portland Archdiocese annually. The archbishop assured us that his goal for every parish is stability in its leadership. However, with a shortage of parish priests, long-term assignments are not always possible.

The archbishop spoke of the church sex abuse scandal and the many conversations he has had with its victims. Along with prevention of further abuse, much his focus is on the healing and restoration of victims of priestly sexual abuse. So often, a victim's relationship with God is broken. He shares in the heartbreaking pain of this tragedy and is deeply committed to the healing of victims and restoring credibility to the priesthood.

During our discussion, many of you had an opportunity to present your thoughts, questions, and concerns to Archbishop Sample. Along with your expressions of gratitude for his visit, questions were raised about extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, permanent deacons, and what our response should be to the current divisive political climate. He made the important point that the devil loves division, which keeps us off our mission to live for Christ and build his Church. On the other hand, unity is a witness to Christ.

Parish Priest's Corner

I want to thank everyone who pitched in to make Archbishop Sample's pastoral visit a wonderful experience for all of us. As we go forward at Holy Trinity, I pray you will find inspiration in his leadership and pastoral care.

- Father Anthony Ahamefule
Parish Priest