

FROM FATHER DAVE

A couple of months ago, I was on hospital call in my former assignment. I was called to give support to a young couple in the birth center. After praying with this couple, I got on the elevator and pressed the key to return to where I entered the hospital. The elevator stopped but the doors did not open. I was stuck. I did not have my cell phone with me. I pressed the emergency call button, and nothing happened. I was stuck in the elevator alone. I pounded on the door. I cried for help. For what seemed like an eternity I felt paralyzed and lost. I could hear voices, but I felt so far away. It was as if my world stopped. Thankfully, after about 15 minutes a hospital worker rescued me. I was able to go on with my day, but I could not stop thinking about the significance of that moment, especially as I was on the threshold of great change in my life.

When I took that moment to pray, I found that it became a metaphor for me about what happens when we fail to change. We become stuck. We stand still.

Life demands that we change and change often. Someone once said, "If we do not change, we die." Change is synonymous with life. It is so hard to embrace change, however. The pandemic has caused us to change our lifestyles. In addition, *The On Mission for the Church Alive!* has challenged us to change our view of Church and what it means to be Church. Needless to say, the whole idea of parish has been broadened as we hear more and more about mergers.

As I reflect upon our transition, I liken it in many ways to marriage. A couple falls in love. They desire to be together for the rest of their life. They become married. From the moment of their wedding day, their life changes with in-laws, shared holidays, new customs, etc. Life is never the same, but hopefully, it is better. They receive many gifts on their wedding day, but one that they do not receive is a scorecard. Together they are to give their all without counting the cost.

The marriage of Saint Alphonsus and Saint Alexis into Saint Aidan is one arranged by the Holy Spirit. In many ways, life will be different, but hopefully better. It is what we choose together to make of it. One thing that is certain is that it can never be the same.

As a result of the fact that parish life as we knew it will be different, there is inevitable grief. In our humanness, we grieve what was. From my own experience of losing my parents back to back, I know how heavy grief can be. One of the things I discovered in my grief is that it can very easily turn into selfishness. Instead of keeping Jesus at the front and center, we can make everything about ourselves in our loss. As your pastor, invite us all to look beyond ourselves in this time of change to what we can be and do together. This is our moment!

In the midst of our collective and personal grief, we all need to keep in mind that our faith is not about buildings, turf, names, or money. Nor is our faith about who wins or loses. Our faith is about a relationship lived out with Jesus Christ in the context of the Church. The goal of this faith is not only communion with Jesus and one another but salvation. We all want to get to heaven.

The primary purpose for the Church's existence is to save souls. This work is something we all share through our baptism. Every day we are to make it about Jesus. Jesus is the reason! He is always there to accompany us through the changes and challenges of our lives. Thank you, Jesus! Let us move forward together following his lead.

Please be sure to see the article by Dave VanVickle in this week's bulletin. I am sure you join me in wishing Dave and his family all of the best of God's blessings and health. Thank you, Dave, for your service.

