

SAINT GERARD'S CATHOLIC COMMUNITY  
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA  
14 APRIL 1985  
SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

ACTS 4: 32-35  
I JOHN 5: 1-6  
JOHN 20: 19-31

MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF SAINT GERARDS! I AM DELIGHTED TO BE WITH YOU TODAY ON THIS OCCASION OF THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE RE-DEDICATION BY BISHOP SULLIVAN OF YOUR RENOVATED PARISH FACILITIES. INDEED I WISH TO HONOR YOU AND YOUR PASTOR FATHER WALTER BARRETT FOR ALL YOUR LABORS AND THE DEDICATION REPRESENTED IN THESE BUILDINGS--THE REBUILT CHURCH AND THE NEW HALL. <sup>Indeed</sup> ~~BUT~~ THESE SPLENDID ACHIEVEMENTS HONOR YOU MORE THAN MY WORDS CAN, AND THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING HERE IS AN HONOR TO ME MORE THAN I CAN BE TO YOU.

*Sisters & Brothers* — ~~BUT~~ YOUR HONOR DOES NOT COME FROM <sup>People</sup> ~~MEN~~: "IF ANYONE SERVES ME," JESUS SAYS, "THE FATHER WILL HONOR HIM." [JOHN 12: 26]. ~~AND~~ YOU ARE HONORED BY OUR HEAVENLY FATHER BECAUSE YOU HAVE SERVED CHRIST FAITHFULLY. THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES TESTIMONY THAT THE FATHER HONORS YOU IN THE RICH VARIETY OF HIS GIFTS WHICH ARE SO EVIDENT IN THE ALIVE COMMUNITY THAT YOU ARE.

YOU ARE ALIVE WITH THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!  
I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR FACES--IN YOUR JOY TO BE HERE IN YOUR CHURCH, BUILT WITH YOUR OWN HANDS, FROM THE STRENGTH AND GENEROSITY ONLY GOD CAN SUPPLY AND HIS SPIRIT INSPIRE.

WHAT IS THE GREATEST GIFT THAT WE HAVE? IS IT NOT THAT WHICH MAKES US A PEOPLE--MAKES US TRULY ONE?

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THE PASTORAL LETTER WHICH WE BLACK BISHOPS OF THE UNITED STATES ADDRESSED TO YOU THIS PAST YEAR, ENTITLED "WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD," REMINDS US THAT WE ARE ONE PEOPLE OF GOD, NOT "BECAUSE IT WAS IN CHAINS THAT OUR PARENTS WERE BROUGHT TO THESE SHORES AND IN VIOLENCE WERE WE MAINTAINED IN BONDAGE . . ." [PASTORAL, PP. 7-8] RATHER--WE WHO ARE "CHILDREN OF PAIN" DRAW OUR STRENGTH TO BECOME A "BRIDGE OF RECONCILIATION," AND WE "WHO ARE OFFSPRING OF VIOLENCE, BECOME THE CHANNELS OF COMPASSION" BECAUSE WE ARE FIRST AND LAST CHILDREN OF FAITH, ONE PEOPLE FORMED BY FAITH IN THE LIVING GOD. AS OUR MOTHERS AND FATHERS SANG SO PROUDLY BEFORE US:

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THE FAITH THAT IS ALIVE WITH LOVE IS NOT AN EASY FAITH. LIKE THOMAS IN THE GOSPEL STORY, OUR FAITH IS TESTED. THE BITTERNESS OF DOUBT IS DESTROYED ONLY IN THE SUFFERINGS OF DOORS CLOSED ON ACCOUNT OF FEAR, AND VISION IMPEDED BY DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSION. FEAR CLOSES THE DOORS AND DOUBT CAN MAKE US CRY--"UNLESS WE SEE THE PRINT OF THE NAILS AND PLACE OUR HAND INTO HIS SIDE, WE CANNOT BELIEVE.....!"

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"THE POWER THAT HAS CONQUERED THE WORLD IS THIS FAITH OF OURS" SAINT JOHN REMINDS US IN THIS MORNING'S READING. THERE IS NO POWER ON EARTH OR

UNDER THE EARTH THAT CAN WITHSTAND THE CREATIVE POWER OF FAITH MADE PRACTICAL IN DEDICATED DEEDS OF FAR-SIGHTED VISION AND LOVE.

"BLESSED ARE THEY WHO HAVE NOT SEEN AND HAVE BELIEVED," JESUS TELLS THOMAS AND US TODAY. WE BELIEVE EVEN WHEN WE HAVE NOT SEEN THE PROGRESS ALL OF US LONG FOR. WE BELIEVE EVEN WHEN WE HEAR DISCOURAGED AND CYNICAL VOICES ALL AROUND US. WE BELIEVE EVEN WHEN OUR NUMBERS SEEM ALL TOO SMALL, AND OUR RESOURCES ARE TAXED AND OUR ENERGIES ARE LOW. WE BELIEVE BECAUSE WE KNOW "DEEP IN OUR HEARTS . . . WE SHALL OVERCOME." WE KNOW THAT WE CARRY THE TREASURE OF CHRIST IN FRAGILE VESSELS "THAT THE SURPASSING POWER MAY BE OF GOD AND NOT OF OURSELVES." [2 COR. 4:7]

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Blessing of ~~Renovated~~ Church  
St. Vincent De Paul  
Feast of Christ the King

23 November 1985  
Dan 7: 13-17  
Rev. 1: 5-8  
John 18: 33-37

My dear brothers and sisters: it is a delight to be with you today, again so soon after so short a time away. Now, at long last the work on your church is completed, and we are ready to to bless and dedicate the pulpit, the altar and the baptistry anew.

I am sure today is a day of mixed feelings for many of you. For some there is a kind of sadness--for change, when we liked the way things were, is always <sup>unsettling</sup> ~~distrubing~~. And even when we very much wanted the changes, --if we have fond memories associated with the old ways--change is not easy. Our hearts are <sup>caught Between</sup> ~~too full~~ ~~the old that nourished us and the new that must be if we shall reach future generations.~~ ~~to know whether we want to laugh or cry.~~

When we dedicate something new in the place of something old, we remind ourselves that we live in a world of change. The young grow up so fast. The grown-ups grow old. The old grow much older. And the living pass away and die. There is a shivery chill to even our best joy--for we sense how very fragile our lives are, and all that we hold dear. Nothing lasts forever.

So our eyes tell us, so we feel and our bones confirm to us what we feel and see and hear. So we gather then to dedicate a new altar of blessings in the place of all our old dear offerings and memories ; a new fount of God's ancient gift of new life, and sins forgiven; a new platform where the gospel we have heard since childhood will be proclaimed renewed.

The old and the new meet in this feastday we celebrate today. The Church year draws to a close, and next week is Advent, a new beginning. The end of the year comes with Christmas time, and we then begin a new year. In the feast of Christ the King, our Ancient God receives His New Creation in the person of His beloved <sup>ONE</sup> ~~Son~~, <sup>the SON OF MAN</sup> ~~the Son of Man~~ and the faithful witness of Revelation brings the memories of God's unfailing mercies, fresh and new to every creature who was, who is, and who is yet to come.

The Gospel presents Jesus on trial before Pilate. Jesus is on trial for his life, but Pilate and the power he represents is really on trial. ~~For~~ Jesus is brought before worldly power: political influence, financial power, military strength--and before this show of might--that very strength shows itself to be powerless.

Jesus --alone, defenseless, betrayed, appearing pitiful and powerless--in His freedom and in His love and merciful forgiveness, shows himself to have the very power of life itself in the midst of suffering and death. ~~And~~ the power of Pilate, of Annas and Caiaphas, the scribes and the pharisees, the rich and the influential--is rendered useless.

"So you are a King," Pilate asks. "This is your word," Jesus answers. Your word--filled with jealousy and competition, fearful and anxious lest it be diminished or lost, contemptuous and condescending, or fawning and hypocritical, always suspicious and ready to be violent--your word, a slave's word. "My word," Jesus says, "is Truth."

"My truth is the truth that will set you free." Free in the weakness of new beginnings, in the willingness to put the past behind by admitting mistakes, by owning up to being wrong, in the seeking and the granting of pardon. In this forgiving and forgetting new life is born, new power comes alive.

The truth is: being weak enough to begin all over again after failure, is a weakness that is filled up with the creative power of God's love. The only true power is that which endures-- not that which is quickly spent and dies forever. And this power is the truth that is new life itself, always beginning, because always ready to begin, to take off from old origins and push onwards toward new horizons and new goals.

True power is new life, life that will always begin, will never be embittered by loss or defeat, has no time for hate or cynicism, greed or revenge. True power is the widow not defeated by the death of her darling husband, ready to face each day bravely through her grief to create new works of love and prayer. True power is the victim of violence who refuses to give up in bitterness and anger, who learns the lessons of forgiveness and grows larger in heart, more compassionate in spirit. True power is the teen who won't give up trying to do what is right when all his pals seem bent on going another direction; the mom who keeps on loving when her kids disappoint her, the dad who forgives even when his trust is betrayed. True power is tolerance in the face of hate, compassion before violence, peace in the midst of strife.

We begin--as Jesus began and always begins in us--in joyful surrender to the presence of God, and in deepest gratitude for the bountiful harvest of His mercies. We rejoice here in this Church of St. Vincent de Paul--apostle of charity--because God has here truly been good to us. Here, between these walls, our sins have been forgiven, our ancient and terrible hurts have been healed. Here our eyes have been opened, and our hearts strengthened and consoled. Here our children have been born new in God's life, our young people have heard their first words about God--here our <sup>CHILDREN</sup> ~~kids~~ have served Mass, our dads have ushered, our grandparents have renewed their old loves, and our dear moms and dads have been buried. Here we made our solemn pledges of new and exciting and frightened loves--here we sought reconciliation when those loves were stretched to the breaking point. Here new life has been born, old life dead has been raised, and here Christ has reigned in the hearts of His people. So here indeed we celebrate today--as we bless this pulpit, consecrate this altar, sanctify this fountain of the waters of God's own life--here indeed we celebrate the Kingship of Christ. We approach the table of the Lord--as we have done so many times before--and as so many thousands before us have done between these walls--to receive the One who has come into the world.

"The very reason I have come"--he says today--"is to testify to the truth. Anyone committed to the truth hears my voice". Indeed my dear people--we have here heard his voice. We hear it again today, and we rejoice.



*The Church of the Transfiguration  
40th Anniversary  
10:30 a.m.*

*Introduction - congratulations and appreciation*

*Introduction II*

- A. Run-away youths - Sarasota*
- B. "I am glad that the Lord has brought us together" -  
first time he had heard something about the reality  
of God in his life*

*I. This is why the Church exists - to help us focus our attention on  
the mystery of God and the manner in which that mystery affects  
our lives - to keep the memory of Father-Son-Holy Spirit alive  
within the hearts of people.*

*Thus, this anniversary celebration is simply the commemoration of the  
number of years Transfiguration has existed, but the events, personalities  
sacrifices and significant moments that have formed the stuff of this  
faith community over these past forty-years.*

*It is the celebration of the sacrifices that made beginnings  
possible and continuity and future possible and inevitable.*

*It is a celebration of a people's self-understanding and  
the vision that have give a particular identity to this community  
of faith.*

*It is the celebration of that uniquely Christian expression  
of faith, hope, and love that has sustained a people and given them  
a sense of purpose and direction.*

The Church celebrates an anniversary to recall the past but not to live in the past; to remember yesterday, but not to be frozen in yesterday; to take pride in past history but not to be imprisoned by history.

The challenge of the Anniversary is to recall the marvelous acts of God in the life of a people, so that we might be free and open to the Spirit of God who guides us, and to the Lordship of Jesus who governs us, and to the praise of the Father who has created us and sustains us.

Yes, ultimately the anniversary celebration is for the present moment and for a future age. It is not nostalgia for the past, or a sentimental yearning for "the good old days," or the occasion to turn back the clock.

Anniversaries remind us that our forebears had the courage and boldness to face their day and age. We are true to them only if we have the courage and boldness to face ours - not to escape the present, but to embrace it and confront it with an eternal message and Person, who vivifies every moment of our lives with his Spirit and redeems every human situation through the Passover Mystery of his Son, Jesus.

II. The problem with the rich young man can also be a problem for the Church:

1. He never saw beyond himself; greed and egotism
2. He never saw beyond this world; narrowness and provincialism

note: Ecclesiastes and Colossians:

"All his days sorrow and grief are his occupation; even at night his mind is not a rest." - Eccles.

"There is no Greek or Jew here, circumcised or uncircumcised, foreigner or Scythian, slave, or freeman. Rather Christ is everything in all of you."

page 3  
Transfiguration - 40th

III. *The Church and the building and the Kingdom*

- *emphasis on peace*
- *bishops pastoral letter on peace*

*helps us move beyond our world*  
*Pope John Paul II and Poland - an example*

①  
To Turn Toward the Year  
Anniversary  
Year of Founding

--mothers & fathers

--students & teachers

--lay leaders

--religious & priests

to <sup>reflect</sup> ~~refer~~, to ponder, to remember --

what the reality was then

and throughout the year

to <sup>interpret</sup> ~~interrupt~~ that reality

to tell stories

to interpret these stories

to remember focal failure

and what we learned from them

to remember focal success

and to draw meaning from them

to allow ourselves to be

sentimental and cry

to be reminiscent and rejoice

to regret and forgive

to be filled with pride

<sup>and</sup>  
~~to~~ be joyful

Above all, to see the hand of God in all of this, to notice how  
God draws straight in crooked lines, to <sup>perceive that</sup> ~~proclaim~~ divine power infused<sup>s</sup>  
human fragility with unbelievable potential, to discover that God in  
each of these 25 years, proclaimed again and again what he spoke in  
the beginning - "Let there be!" and so it happened - in each and

2

every year of the 25 - God created anew - out of nothing, out of something - a people and a place, at once beautifully unique and uniquely beautiful - a people and place, God could call "mine." It is as though the waters of Baptism never cease to stir, it is as though the Spirit is always brooking<sup>d</sup>, it is as though the seven days of creation are perennially repeated - for what was founded was of God, and that which is of God lasts and lasts forever - for it flows through the blood of a people, and the blood of a people painfully but pridefully passes from generation to generation - draws into the living Body of Christ, redeemed anew by the Eucharistic Redeemer, until that Final Day, that Second Coming, when Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, shall confirm the Apocalyptic Day, and present the universe to the Father.

As James Weldon Johnson put it:

(insert poem)

Anniversaries, however, do more than examine the founding years and reminisc<sup>?</sup> about succeeding ones. Anniversaries necessarily thrust us into the future and compel us to ask deep questions, even startling questions, and definitely challenging questions.

Clearly, 1937 and succeeding years were those of struggle, filled with sinful racism and brutal discrimination. There has been some improvement, but racism, in Church and society, still perdures and excludes, albeit more subtly. But, dare we ask, we - the alumni and inheritors of Saint Augustine, Father Bertrand, and Saint Thomas - have ~~we~~ we remained in the struggle for human rights? Have we cast our lots with all God's children who are are not free, in whatever country, on whatever continent? <sup>above</sup> What do we know more ~~about~~ - the concept of freedom, the plight of the dispossessed, the hunger

③ ✓  
of the human family, or do we know more about the characters on TV soap operas, able to recite chapter and verse of "All My Children" in the morning, "General Hospital" in the afternoon, and "Knots Landing" in the evening. These are valid and timely questions, are they not? are they not?

"Repeat after me," writes Lorraine <sup>Harding</sup> ~~Harding~~ in "Raisin in the Sun" - "In my mother's <sup>house</sup> ~~love~~, there is God"! Remember those days, dear friends, when God was as clear and near as the loving embrace of parents and as powerfully present as an engaging sunrise and as caring and soothing as a warm spring day? In those days, in 1937, prayer - morning and night and at family meals - and Wednesday and Sunday worship (at <sup>least</sup> ~~best~~) consecrated the day and life and all human activity to God.

Who is our God today? Are our bodies too <sup>Drugged</sup> ~~brittle~~, our minds to fragile, our senses to dull, our hearts too cold - that we have forgotten what our forbearers knew so well - "<sup>In my house,</sup> ~~I am the Lord, your~~ <sup>here is God."</sup> ~~God, you shall not have strange gods before you.~~ ? Do we have - <sup>Powers? Position?</sup> "strange gods"? Who is God for us today? Money? Things? Prestige? <sup>^</sup> Has not humanity today steeped itself - <sup>but</sup> ~~but~~ more deeply than <sup>in yesterday's -</sup> ~~before~~ into <sup>these</sup> ~~the~~ age of old futilities? Martin Luther King was <sup>murdered</sup> ~~xxxxx~~ in this very city for freedom, <sup>Yes, killed -</sup> ~~yes~~ but not <sup>for</sup> freedom to have, but <sup>for</sup> freedom to be - so that in the being, we would first possess our our souls. "Look" dear friends, "at the lilies of the field."...

Psychologists recognize the emptiness, loneliness, and alienative and sexual <sup>solipsism</sup> ~~xxx~~ of contemporary society. Could it be that the fundamental, though unrecognized, disposition of the modern person, is the loss of soul? These are valid and timely questions, are they not?

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Clearly, in 1937, the Black family was much stronger and the extended family for more faithful to family ties. In, 19xx, xx% of Black families were xxxx.

Despite all odds, the family was together, until today today, however, xxxxx

Are we ready to concede that our foremother and father were constitutionally stronger, women of substanse, men of valor, children of determination? After God, there was family: Or shall we say, because of God, there was family - strong, loving, and wise. These are valid and timely questions, are they not?

It has been a great honor for me to deliver this anniversary address tonight. However, I wish God would resurrect, just for this solemn occasion one founding father or mother from 1937. I wonder, what would that person say today?

Is this not a valid and timely question?

These are hard questions, ,but I am convinced that I must ask them. Dr. Hose, a Coach Porter, a Father Bertrand or a Sister Kilian did not and do not give this life for us merely to conform.

ASCENSION SCHOOL: FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY  
1 MAY 1986

Is. 63: 7-9  
COL. 3: 12-17  
MATT. 7: 7-11

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS -- FORTY YEARS IS A VERY LONG TIME. A LOT OF YOU--YOUR MOMS AND DADS WEREN'T EVEN BORN THEN, FORTY YEARS AGO. HARRY S. TRUMAN WAS PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. WORLD WAR II WAS JUST OVER A SHORT WHILE. AN ICE CREAM CONE COST A NICKLE, AND YOU COULD SEE A MOVIE ON A SATURDAY AFTERNOON--COMPLETE WITH NEWSREELS AND A CARTOON, FOR A DIME. POPE PIUS XII WAS THE POPE, THE MASS WAS IN LATIN, AND BOYS AND GIRLS SAT ON DIFFERENT SIDES IN THE CHURCH FOR SUNDAY MASS USUALLY. YOU SAT WITH YOUR OWN CLASS, WITH THE SISTER WHO TAUGHT YOU, AND YOU BETTER NOT MAKE ANY NOISE OR TURN AROUND OR YOU WERE IN BIG TROUBLE. GIRLS WORE SKIRTS THAT CAME DOWN HALF WAY BETWEEN THEIR KNEES AND ANKLES, AND THEY WORE BOBBY SOX AND WHITE AND BLACK SHOES, AND BOYS WORE KNICKERS WHICH WERE KIND OF BAGGY PANTS THAT CAME JUST BELOW THE KNEES WITH ELASTIC, AND WORE LONG STOCKINGS THAT HAD TO BE HELD UP WITH RUBBER BANDS OR GARTERS, AND YOU USUALLY HAD SUSPENDERS INSTEAD OF A BELT. YOU HAD TO WEAR THOSE THINGS UNTIL YOU GOT INTO EIGHTH GRADE OR HIGH SCHOOL. EVERYTHING YOU WORE PRACTICALLY HAD TO BE IRONED, AND CLOTHES WERE WASHED IN WASH MACHINES WITH A BIG CHURN INSIDE, AND HAD TO GO THROUGH A BIG HARD RUBBER OR WOODEN WRINGER AND BE HUNG OUT WITH WOODEN CLOTHESPINS ON LONG LINES IN THE BACK YARD IN THE WARM WEATHER, OR IN THE BASEMENT IN THE WINTER TIME. BOYS PLAYED MARBLES AND TRADED COLORED CARDS OF BASEBALL STARS THAT YOU GOT WITH BUBBLE GUM, / AND GIRLS PLAYED JACKS OR HOP-SCOTCH.



~~AND~~ NO ONE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD HAD EVEN SEEN A TELEVISION SET, THOUGH PEOPLE WERE TALKING ABOUT THEM. MOSTLY YOU LISTENED TO GREAT BIG WOODEN RADIOS IN THE LIVING ROOM-- TO PROGRAMS LIKE JACK BENNY, ~~AMOS AND ANDY~~, THE SHADOW KNOWS, AND TRACER OF LOST PERSONS. EACH SHOW LASTED ABOUT A HALF HOUR, AND THEY WENT ALL SUNDAY AFTERNOON.

IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO, FORTY YEARS AGO. IT IS FUN TO REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS LIKE BACK THEN, IF YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER. AND IF YOU AREN'T OLD ENOUGH, MAYBE IT IS FUN TO IMAGINE WHAT IT WAS LIKE. WE LIKE TO DO THAT SORT OF THING--REMEMBER OR IMAGINE THE PAST--MAYBE EVEN TO PRETEND THAT WE WERE THERE. REMEMBER THAT MOVIE: "BACK TO THE FUTURE"--WHERE MICHAEL FOX GOT TO GO BACK IN A TIME MACHINE TO THE DAYS HIS OWN PARENTS WERE KIDS?

WHY ARE WE SO FASCINATED BY THE PAST? WHY DO WE LOVE TO LISTEN TO OLD FOLKS TELL US ABOUT WHAT IT WAS LIKE WHEN WE WERE BABIES--OR WHAT IT USED TO BE LIKE WHEN THEY WERE KIDS? IT IS BECAUSE THE PAST HAS SO MUCH TO TEACH US--WE COME FROM THE PAST; BEFORE WE WERE BORN, THE WORLD WAS BEING PREPARED TO RECEIVE US. GOD ALWAYS HAD US IN MIND, AND TREMENDOUS AND GOOD THINGS WERE BEING PREPARED FOR US: IDEAS WERE BEING FORMED, HOMES AND FAMILIES WERE GETTING ESTABLISHED--ALL WAS BEING MADE READY FOR US.

WE CAN SEE WHERE WE CAME FROM--AND THAT IS THE BEGINNING OF OUR BEST IDEAS ABOUT WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE ARE GOING TO BECOME. IT IS A TERRIBLE THING TO HAVE NO HISTORY AT ALL.

WITHOUT A HISTORY IT IS LIKE WE JUST HAPPENED, LIKE AN ACCIDENT. HISTORY GIVES US OUR PLAN: A LOVING DESIGN, A HOME, A CULTURE, A LANGUAGE, A PLACE WHERE WE BELONG, A PEOPLE TO WHOM WE BELONG --AS CHILDREN OF GOD, NO LONGER STRANGERS AND ORPHANS--TO ONE ANOTHER AND TO GOD.

TO SHARE A HISTORY HELPS US BELONG TO ONE ANOTHER, AS ONE FAMILY. IT HELPS US SHARE A COMMON STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE FOR ALL. WHEN WE REMEMBER HOW HARD OUR PARENTS HAD TO WORK, THE GREAT SACRIFICES OUR GRANDPARENTS OR GREAT GRANDPARENTS HAD TO MAKE, TO BUILD A HOUSE OR START A BUSINESS, OR MAKE A LIVING, THEN / WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THEM AND GOD FOR PROVIDING SO WELL FOR US TODAY. ~~AND~~ WE HONOR THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHO SACRIFICED SO MUCH TO GIVE US FREEDOM AND ALL THE GOOD THINGS WE HAVE--WHEN WE SHARE TODAY IN CARING ABOUT OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO ARE NOT FREE, WHO DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT, WHO HAVE NO FINE SCHOOL TO GO TO, NOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO GROW UP STRONG AND HEALTHY, WITH A GOOD EDUCATION AND JOBS AND PLACES TO LIVE AND HAVE FAMILIES.

WE REMEMBER THE STRUGGLES OF THE PAST AND HONOR OUR OWN BRAVE ANCESTORS BEST / WHEN WE JOIN OUR SUFFERING AND OPPRESSED BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THEIR STRUGGLES FOR JUSTICE AND FREEDOM. WE ARE THEN TRULY SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF OUR HEROIC MOTHERS AND FATHERS AND GRANDPARENTS. WE ARE THEN TRUE AMERICANS AND TRUE CATHOLICS AND TRUE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST. BECAUSE THEN WE REMEMBER OUR PAST

NOT WITH JUST WORDS OR DAYDREAMS--WE REMEMBER WITH TRUE DEEDS OF FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE.

"ASK AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN TO YOU," THIS IS WHAT THE GOSPEL TELLS US TODAY. WE WHO HAVE RECEIVED SO VERY MUCH ALL OUR LIVES, KNOW THAT THIS IS TRUE. GOD HAS BEEN WITH US, AS ISAIAH REMINDS US IN THE FIRST READING. AND WITH THE COLLOSSIAN PEOPLE WE WILL BE TRUE TO THE BLESSINGS OF OUR INHERITANCE, WHEN WE PUT ON THE HEART OF COMPASSION, AND LEARN THE WAYS OF FORGIVENESS AND PEACE.

THE PAST IS ALSO --VERY SADLY--A STORY OF VIOLENCE, INJUSTICE AND HATRED: BETWEEN RICH AND POOR, SLAVES AND MASTERS, BLACK AND WHITE, CATHOLICS, PROTESTANTS, AND JEWS-- SO MUCH DIVISION, SO MUCH BLOOD SHED--WHERE WILL IT ALL END? LET IT BE HERE AND NOW. LET IT BE TODAY, LET IT BEGIN WITH US., AS WE LEARN FROM OUR PAST AND RECEIVE THE BLESSINGS OF THOSE WHO WENT BEFORE US. LET US BE TRUE TO THEIR MEMORY IN GRATITUDE AND LOVE, AND HONOR THEM BEST BY WORKING ALL OUR DAYS / FOR TOLERANCE, RESPECT FOR LIFE AND FOR OTHERS, AND POSITIVE PRACTICAL ACTION FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE, ALONG WITH OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO LONG TO BE FREE.

FORTY YEARS IS A LONG TIME--BUT THE ETERNAL MERCIES OF GOD ARE GREATER BEYOND ANY COMPARISON AND SO ARE OUR HEARTS TODAY, FILLED WITH GRATITUDE AND WITH THE GRACE OF GOD. MAY THAT PEACE DWELL RICHLY IN YOUR HEARTS TODAY AND ALWAYS.

ST. GERARD ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH 7TH SUNDAY OF YEAR (A)  
40TH ANNIVERSARY /BL.HIST.MONTH LEV. 19: 1-2. 17-18  
22 FEBRUARY 1987, 10 A.M. 1 COR. 3: 16-23  
MT. 5: 38-40.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS--IT IS GOOD TO BE HOME: EVEN HERE IN "OL' VIRGINNY"--THE HEART OF THE OLD CONFEDERACY. YES--THE BLOOD SHED HERE BY OUR FATHERS AND MOTHERS IN SLAVERY HAS SET US FREE, AND THE FREE CHILD OF GRACE HAS A RIGHT TO BE HOME -- EVEN IN "OL' VIRGINNY" -- HOME SWEET HOME.

IT IS GOOD TO BE HOME--AMONG BROTHERS AND SISTERS BORN FREE, BORN FREE ENOUGH TO REMEMBER. AND WHAT A MEMORY WE HAVE, THIS BLACK HISTORY MONTH, AND EVEN THESE FORTY YEARS OF CATHOLIC HISTORY HERE AT ST. GERARD PARISH. WE REMEMBER. AND STRONG IS A FAITH THAT IS NOT AFRAID TO REMEMBER.

AND THAT IS THE DEFINITION OF A HOME: A PLACE, A TIME, A PEOPLE TO REMEMBER WITHOUT FEAR AND IN A LIVING FAITH, A FAITH COMMITTED TO THE FUTURE, A FAITH NOT AFRAID TO WALK THE WALK, LIKE OUR FORBEARS, WHATEVER THE COST--FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE US, A KINGDOM OF JUSTICE, A LAND PROMISED WHERE ALL GOD'S CHILDREN BREATHE FREE.

WE ARE A HOLY PEOPLE--OUR SCRIPTURE TEACHES US TODAY. SAINT PAUL CALLS US A "TEMPLE OF THE LORD," A HOME WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELLS. IT IS NOT ON ACCOUNT OF ANYTHING SPECIAL THAT WE ARE OR HAVE ACCOMPLISHED ON OUR OWN--WE HAVE NO CAUSE TO BRAG OR BOAST ANYMORE THAN

WOOD, CAT GUT, AND HORSEHAIR CAN TAKE CREDIT FOR THE HARMONIES OF A MOZART VIOLIN CONCERTO THAT FLOWS GLORIOUSLY ACCROSS THE STRINGS AND RESONATES IN THE CHAMBER OF A SKILLFULLY PLAYED VIOLIN. NO, WE CANNOT BRAG--FOR WE ARE FRAGILE VESSELS SO THAT THE SURPASSING POWER MAY BE OF GOD AND NOT OF OURSELVES [CF. 2 COR. 4: 7]

WE ARE MADE BY GOD, SUMMONED AS A PEOPLE BY GOD, FORMED EACH DAY BY GOD'S SACRED AND UNALTERABLE WILL FOR US REVEALED IN HIS PRECIOUS LIFE-GIVING WORD -- JESUS IN OUR MIDST.

BE HOLY AS I AM HOLY--THUS SPEAKS THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS. AND A PEOPLE FORMED BY THE LORD AS HIS DWELLING PLACE HAS NO PLACE FOR THE FALSE GODS OF SELF-PROJECTION, OF THAT SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH MAKES OF THE LAW, EVEN THE LAW OF GOD, A PRINCIPLE OF SELF-CONGRATULATION. SUCH SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS BREEDS ONLY DISTINCTIONS, ENDLESS DIVISIONS AND EXCLUSIONS, AND THE VIOLENCE WHOSE FATHER AND CHILD IS FEAR.

THE LAW OF GOD CAN NEVER SERVE FAVORITISM-- A FALSE IDOL THAT POORLY MIMICS TRUE BLESSING. WE ARE NOT BETTER THAN ANY OTHER PEOPLE. BLACK MAY BE BEAUTIFUL INDEED, BUT IT IS NOT BETTER. NOR IS WHITE--NOR BEING JEW OR GENTILE, MALE OR FEMALE, NOR DOES ANY OTHER DISTINCTION OF RACE, COLOR, SYSTEM OF BELIEF, OR CONDITION OF EXISTENCE IN ANY WAY COUNT BEFORE GOD--NO HUMAN BEING IS BETTER OR WORSE THAN ANY OTHER. ONLY GOD IS GOOD THROUGH AND THROUGH, AND ALL GOODNESS FLOWS FROM HIM AND HIM ALONE.

THE LAW OF GOD IS NOT A PRINCIPLE OF FAVORITISM, NOR EXCLUSIVENESS, THAT SETS US APART IN MUTUAL SELF-CONGRATULATION, A NARROW, INWARD-DRAWING CULTURAL IMPERIALISM--A RACISM IN REVERSE WHICH WOULD MAKE US THINK THAT WE ARE BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE BECAUSE WE HAVE EITHER RECEIVED MORE OR SUFFERED MORE. BLESSINGS AND BURDENS DO NOT MAKE US DISTINCT--BUT GOD ALONE CHOOSES WHOM HE WILL CHOOSE, AND SENDS WHOM HE WILL SEND. "ALL GENERATIONS WILL CALL ME BLESSED," MARY THE MOTHER OF JESUS CRIES OUT, "FOR THE MIGHTY ONE HAS DONE GREAT THINGS FOR ME, AND HOLY IS HIS NAME." [LUKE 1: 48-49] MARY IS NOT CONGRATULATING HERSELF ON A GOOD FORTUNE--BUT SHE OVERFLOWS WITH JOY: SHE HAS HEARD THE WORD, AND RUSHES EAGERLY TO FULFILL IT, AS A CHOSEN VESSEL OVERFLOWING WITH GRACE FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD. SO ALSO WITH US: WHAT WE HAVE ENDURED, WHAT WE HAVE RECEIVED, WHAT WE HAVE DISCOVERED, WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED: IS GRACE, A GIFT OF GRACE, A HUNGER AND A THIRST FOR JUSTICE THAT WILL BRING LIFE --EVERLASTING LIFE--FOR THE WORLD!

IN OTHER WORDS, GOD'S DISPENSATION, HIS HOLY LAW, IS A PRINCIPLE OF SUFFUSION, A SYSTEM OF DISTRIBUTION. AS THE NEW TEMPLE OF THE LORD WE ARE EMPOWERED IN THE SPIRIT TO BE A GRACE DISTRIBUTION CENTER IN THE MIDDLE OF A STARVING, JOYLESS WORLD. WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD, WHAT WE HAVE HANDLED WITH OUR HANDS AND RECEIVED--THIS WE JOYFULLY GIVE. WE OVERFLOW WITH LIFE: COME, COME TO THE WATERS. COME,

TAKE AND EAT, COME, ALL YOU WITHOUT MONEY, AND BE FILLED WITHOUT COST! [CF. IS. 55: 1]

YOU MUST BE MADE PERFECT AS YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PERFECT. SO JESUS CALLS US TO COMPLETE THE WORK THAT OUR HEAVENLY FATHER HAS BEGUN IN OUR MIDST. WE ARE CALLED TO BUILD UP THE CITY OF GOD--BEGINNING IN THE HOLY TEMPLE OF OUR FAMILIES, OUR CHURCH, OUR COMMUNITY --IN THE SPACE AND TIME WE CALL HOME.

WE BEGIN WITH FAITH: A FAITH PASSED ON, A FAITH RECEIVED. WE MUST NOT BE AFRAID TO STUDY AND LEARN THE LESSONS OF OUR BRAVE FATHERS AND MOTHERS WHO HAVE GIVEN SO MUCH SO THAT WE MIGHT HAVE A LIFE AND FREEDOM THEY LIVED AND DIED FOR, AND ONLY GLIMPSED FROM AFAR: "ALL THESE GAINED APPROVAL FOR THEIR FAITH, BUT THEY DID NOT RECEIVE THE PROMISE--BECAUSE GOD HAD PROVIDED BETTER FOR US TODAY--SO THAT APART FROM US, THEY SHOULD NOT BE MADE PERFECT. [HEB. 11: 39-40]

IN HISTORY--AND IN LIFE, WE ARE NOT ALONE. WE ARE GIVEN TO EACH OTHER TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER, TO SEEK GOD'S TRUTH FROM ONE ANOTHER, TO BUILD UP ONE ANOTHER IN THE STRENGTH OF OUR FAITH. ALL THAT WE HAVE, IS A TREASURE RECEIVED, PURCHASED BY THE BLOOD OF OTHERS, FALLEN HEROES AND HEROINES GONE BEFORE. AND WE NOW RECEIVE THE GIFT IN PLEDGE: "FREELY YOU HAVE RECEIVED, NOW FREELY PASS ON, GIVE WHAT YOU HAVE FREELY RECEIVED." [MATT. 10:8] SO JESUS CALLS ON US TODAY.

ST. GERARD -- P 5

WE BEGIN WITH FAITH--DEARLY BOUGHT, DEARLY GIVEN, BLESSING AND COSTING TOGETHER THOSE WHO GIVE AND THOSE WHO RECEIVE. WE CONTINUE ON IN HOPE--THAT IS TESTED AND PURIFIED IN THE SUFFERINGS WHICH WE ENDURE. WE COMMIT OURSELVES, WE INVEST IN THE FUTURE BY THE SACRIFICES WE MAKE TODAY. EVEN THOUGH WE SEE ONLY IN PART AND KNOW ONLY BUT A LITTLE--WE HOPE WITH AN INDESTRUCTABLE SPIRIT, BECAUSE GOD'S LOVE HAS BEEN POURED OUT WITHIN US. THIS HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT, FOUNDED ON SUCH A GIFT OF GOD.

BEGUN IN FAITH, CONTINUING ON IN HOPE, WE END IN LOVE--POURED OUT UPON US, OVERFLOWING WITHIN US. THE LOVE THAT IS THE VERY LIFE AND POWER OF GOD OVERFLOWS THE BOUNDARIES OF FAITH AND HOPE, THE FRAILTIES OF OUR SMALL ATTEMPTS AND IMPERFECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, TO GIVE LIFE TO THE WORLD. HATRED IS MET BY LOVE, DISTRUST AND CYNICISM IS MET BY KINDNESS AND PATIENT CARE, INJUSTICE AND VIOLENCE ARE VANQUISHED BY PERSEVERANCE AND PRAYER-FILLED LOVE, AND PEACE--OVERFLOWING LIKE A RIVER, CAN SET THE PEOPLE FREE!

SUCH LIVES BUILT UPON SUCH SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS ARE NOT PASSIVE BEFORE INJUSTICE, INDIFFERENT TO EVIL, FEARFUL OF CONFRONTATION, DESPAIRING OF SYSTEMIC CHANGE. TRUE SPIRITUALITY CANNOT BE INWARD TURNING, SELF-INDULGENT. QUITE THE CONTRARY: THE HOME OF THE SPIRIT, THE TEMPLE OF GOD IS PURGED OF SELFISH GAIN. NOR DOES IT COUNT THE



ST. GERARD -- P 6

COST--FOR GOD HAS NEVER ASKED US FOR SUCCESS. ONLY  
FIDELITY. RICHLY INDEED HAS HE ALWAYS SUPPLIED OUR  
NEEDS, AND HOW RIPE IS THE HARVEST OF HIS BLESSINGS  
FOR ALL GOD'S PEOPLE WHO HUNGER FOR HIS BREAD AT OUR  
HANDS.

The Fifteenth Anniversary  
of People's Community Church  
Saturday, March 12, 1988  
Berea, Ohio  
6:30 p.m.  
Baldwin Wallace College

Pastor McCreary, Members of People's Community Church,  
and Guests:

The story is told of the 18th century abbot who became fascinated with the phenomenon of electricity. The abbot ordered all of his 1000 monks to form a circle and to join hands. He then applied the electric current, and all 1000 monks jumped up precisely at the same moment!

There are three conclusions we can draw from this story. First and most obviously, electricity moves with astonishing speed. Secondly, 18th century abbots possessed an amazing power over their monks. Or, thirdly, wouldn't it be wonderful if all the members of People's Community Church would get so excited that all would jump in the air at the same time!

Indeed, that is what is happening today as we celebrate the Fifteenth Anniversary of People's Community Church: there is excitement in the air, electricity in your bones, amazement in your minds, astonishment in your hearts, and wonder in your souls!

This Fifteenth Anniversary is not simply the commemoration of the number of years that this congregation

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has existed. It is the remembrance of the events, personalities, sacrifices and significant moments that have formed the stuff of this faith community over these past fifteen years.

It is the celebration of the sacrifices that made beginnings possible and continuity and the future inevitable.

It is the celebration of a people's self-understanding and the vision that has given a particular identity to this community of faith.

It is the celebration of that uniquely Christian expression of faith, hope and love that has sustained a people and given them a sense of purpose and direction.

You celebrate this anniversary, dear friends, to recall the past but not to live in the past; to remember yesterday, but not to be frozen in yesterday; to take pride in history but not to be imprisoned by history.

The challenge of the anniversary celebration is to recall the marvelous acts of God in the life of a people, so that we might be free and open to the Spirit of God who guides us, the Lordship of Jesus who governs us, and to praise the Father who has created and sustains us.

Yes, ultimately the anniversary celebration is for the present moment and for a future age. It is not nostalgia for the past, or a sentimental yearning for "the good old days," or the occasion to turn back the clock.

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Anniversaries remind us that our forebears had the courage and boldness to face their day and age. We are true to them only if we have the courage and boldness to face ours - not to escape the present, but to embrace it and confront it with an eternal message and Person, who vivifies every mement of our lives with the Holy Spirit and redeems every human situation through the Passover Mystery of Jesus, the Christ.

Anniversaries also remind us of the importance of history in the life of the congregation. Fifteen years is not a long, long time. Still, it is stimulating, if not downright fun, to remember what it was like "in the beginning." We like to do that sort of thing - remember or imagine the past; maybe even to pretend that we were there (if we were not). Remember that movie, "Back to the Future," where Michael Fox got to go back in a time machine to the days his own parents were kids?

Why are we so fascinated by the past? Why do we love to listen to old folks tell us about what it was like when we were babies, or what it used to be like when they were kids? It is because that the past has so much to teach us. We come from the past. Before we were born, the world was being prepared to receive us. God always had us in mind, and tremendous and marvelous things were being readied for us: ideas were being formed, families and homes

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were getting established. Everybody was "getting it together" for us.

Dear friends, it is a terrible thing to have no history at all. Through history, we see where we came from and discover the source of our best ideas about who we are and what we are going to become. Without history it is as though we just happened, like an accident. History gives us our plan: a loving design, a home, a culture, a language, a place where we belong, a people to whom we belong - as children of God, no longer strangers and orphans, but truly believers in God and in one another. To share a common history helps us belong to one another, as one family. When we remember how hard our founders and elders had to work and the great sacrifices they made to begin and sustain this community of faith - then, we are grateful to them and to God for providing so well for us today.

But, dear friends, what about the future? The anniversary celebration takes place in the present but its import thrusts us into the future. I wish to share three reflections with you - about the nature of the Church, a captivating image of the Church, and the Church in service to the poor.

First, the nature of the Church. I know that you have finally reached the day when you are constructing your own church. Congratulations! As one who comes from a tradition of elegant, cathedral-like church buildings

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which incarnate the ethos, history and culture of a people, I know the meaning of a strong and inspiring church building. But, quite frankly, I also know that people can identify "the Church" with the church building. An elegant church building does not necessarily signal an elegant portion of the living Body of Christ! How else can I explain the fact so many of my own Catholic people abandoned church buildings when remaining in the neighborhood meant living in integrated situations, areas, or schools with Black, Hispanic, or Asian minorities? Truly, the church building is but a sign of a deeper reality - it is not the reality, only a sign, a symbol. Thus, there is a profound statement you are making when you construct a new church building. The fifth century African saint, Augustine of Hippo, says it so beautifully and pointedly, when he himself preached at the dedication of a church:

*We are gathered together to celebrate the dedication of a house of prayer. This is our house of prayer, but we too are a house of God. If we are a house of God, its construction goes on in time so that it may be dedicated at the end of time. The house, in its construction, involves hard work, while its dedication is an occasion for rejoicing.*

*What was done when this church was being built is similar to what is done when believers are built up into Christ. When they first come to believe they are like timber and stone taken from woods and mountains. In their instruction, baptism and formation they are, so to speak, shaped, leveled and smoothed by the hands of carpenters and craftsmen.*

*But Christians do not make a house of God until they are one in charity. The timber and stone must fit together in an orderly plan, must be joined in perfect harmony, must give each other the support as it were of love, or no one would enter the building. When you see the stones and beams of a building holding together securely, you enter the building with an easy mind; you are not afraid of its falling down in ruins.*

*Christ the Lord wants to come in to us and dwell in us. Like a good builder he says: "A new commandment I give you: love one another." He says: "I give you a commandment." He means: Before, you were not engaged in building a house for me, but you lay in ruins. Therefore, to be raised up from your former state of ruin you must love one another.*

*Dear brethren, remember that this house is still in process of being built in the whole world: this is the promise of prophecy. When God's house was being built after the Exile, it was prophesied, in the words of a psalm: "Sing a new song to the Lord; sing to the Lord, all the earth." For a new song our Lord speaks of a new commandment. A new song implies a new inspiration of love. To sing is a sign of love. The singer of this new song is full of the warmth of God's love.*

*St. Augustine  
Bishop of Hippo, Africa  
d. 430*

"But Christians do not make a house of God until they are one in charity," Saint Augustine tells us. This leads to my second reflection. Charity is lived, not in the abstract but in the concrete. The Church, whether in its local or universal expression, needs a captivating image that inspires and empowers us to make love concrete, to put theory into practice, words into action, the Two Great

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Commandments into Monday through Saturday life.

"But because he - the lawyer - wished to justify himself," we read in Saint Luke's Gospel (10: 25-37), "he said to Jesus," 'And who is my neighbor?'"

"Jesus replied, 'There was a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho who fell prey to robbers.'"

Thus, in this great parable of the Good Samaritan the Church has a stark, striking, and stimulating image of what it means to love. From the Good Samaritan we learn several practical points about Christian love and the mission of the Church:

1. God's love is all-inclusive: any and every person is my neighbor. The Church is for everybody.
2. Christian love demands that we do something about the plight of the other. The priest and Levite no doubt shook their heads in pity and sorrow. But, feelings, however much they move us to tears, are not enough. The Church's help must be personal and practical.
3. Christian love involves a risk and a sacrifice. Perhaps, the robbers were still hiding in the bushes when the Good Samaritan came along. The Church cannot wait until it is safe before it acts.



4. Christian love is counter-cultural: it often stands as a critique against the prevailing mores of the times. The Samaritan, either because he was not a Judaeon, or because he was a heretic or legal purist, should not have stopped to assist the robber -- if he would have followed the practice of the time. The Church, too, must be a sign of contradiction, working against and, at times, even disobeying man-made laws that violate the law of God.

Surely, one can examine the inexhaustible richness of the parable of the Good Samaritan and discover other concrete implications for church life. The image of the Good Samaritan, to sum up my point, sharpens the Church's awareness, deepens its commitment, and fosters mutual support and collaboration in bringing the gospel message to bear on contemporary society.

A final reflection on the Church in service to the poor. There is a way, sisters and brothers, in which the poor evangelize the Church! The poor, in the first instance, open our eyes to the injustices they suffer and to the sinful structures and systems which oppress them. The poor Christ, the suffering Christ, speaks to us through their voices: "Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers, that you do unto to me" (Matthew 25).

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Secondly, the poor communicate to us a sense of urgency and help us to understand the causes of their anger. Mother Theresa of Calcutta tells us that we should recognize the presence of the poor Jesus in the "distressing disguise of the poor."

Thirdly, the poor call us to a greater faithfulness to the Gospel: to a deeper spirit of sparing and sharing, generosity, hospitality, service, a greater spirit of simplicity. The poor call use to re-examine our life-style. Do I progress socio-economically on the backs of the poor, able to amass and consume material goods because the poor, here and abroad, work long hours for extremely low and non-supporting wages?

Finally, the poor challenge us to a theology and spirituality of the total Gospel. Whether concerning doctrine or morality, the poor raise our minds and hearts to the social dimensions of the Christian message, and even clearer, they tell us that we are not saved as individuals but as a people, and that all doctrine is social doctrine.

Brothers and Sisters, earlier in this address I asked the question, "What about the future?" What lies ahead for People's Community Church? You look with pride and joy over these past fifteen years. Rightfully so! Indeed, I hope and pray that you chronicle all the marvels God has wrought through you. Remember, we must preserve our history!

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People's Community Church

But, the future! You shall make the future by choice; you shall shape your future in freedom. As you build upon these past fifteen years, may you do so with a clear understanding of who we are as Church, as the People of God. May you face the future with a graphic image of an involved Christian and Church - an image like the Good Samaritan, "strong, loving, wise"; an image that will correct and challenge. And, as the numbers of poor and powerless, here and abroad, constantly grow and spread; may you as a faith community reflect the compassionate Jesus, who shared his very life for the salvation of the world.

Pastor McCreary and beloved members and guests, it has been an honor for me to be with you on this blessed occasion of your fifteenth anniversary. You surely have my prayers and fraternal support as you proceed in the years ahead.

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May he show his face to you and have  
mercy upon you.

May he turn his countenance toward you  
and give you his peace.

The Lord bless you.

Amen.

Most Reverend James P. Lyke, O.F.M., Ph.D.  
Auxiliary Bishop of Cleveland

The Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

The Centenary Anniversary Opening

June 10, 1988, Friday

7:00 p.m.

A Johns Hopkins University medical researcher discovered what the Presbyterian Ministers' Life Insurance Fund has known for more than two centuries: attending church is good for our health.

The risk of fatal heart diseases is almost twice as high for the non-churchgoer than for those who attend once a week or more, according to a study made by Dr. George W. Comstock of the university's Department of Epidemiology. The doctor also observed that the "clean life" associated with regular churchgoing appears to be statistically related to a lower incidence of other major diseases, adding that going to church is a very favorable input.\*

Now isn't this just the kind of news we like to hear as we begin to celebrate one hundred years of the life and love of Sacred Heart of Jesus Church. Dr. Comstock's research is verified by the church's burial records, as one can readily observe the long life of its members before the Lord calls them to eternal peace. Indeed, present with us today are parishioners who were alive and active during the early years of this parish.

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What is even more noteworthy, however, is that none of your elder communicants were drawn to the Church to insure a long life. It was not life's longevity that led them to the waters of baptism. It was the character and quality of life that is the fruit of faith, hope, and love: faith in the Triune God, hope in eternal destiny with God, love of God and the neighbor who bears the image of God. This is why the words of Saint Paul to the centuries-old Church of God, in Ephesus, apply so aptly to the century-old church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus:

May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may charity be the root and foundation of your life. Thus you will be able to grasp fully , with all the holy ones, the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love, and experience this love which surpasses all knowledge, so that you may attain to the fullness of God himself. (3: 17-19)

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Dear Friends, it is most appropriate to celebrate this centennial on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus - not simply because it is your patronal feast day, but, more profoundly, because of the link between the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Church.

You see, the Judaeen law demanded that those who were crucified for capital offense had to be buried on the same day. Thus, if the criminal were not already dead, iron clubs were used to break the legs to hasten their death. This, in fact, was done to Dismas, the Good Thief, and the other criminal crucified with Jesus. The Saviour appeared to be already dead, but, to make sure of his death, the soldier pierced his side with a lance. It was a shamefully gory and ghastly scene, witnessed by the Mother of Jesus herself. That is why we refer to her under the title of the "Immaculate Heart of Mary."

With the thrusting of the lance in Jesus' side, however, great signs appeared - and this is where we see the connection between Christ and the Church. First, the Scriptures were fulfilled:

"Break none of his bones"

- Exodus 12: 26; and,

"They shall look upon him  
whom they have pierced"-

Zechariah 12:10.

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Both of these Old Testament passages were a sign of the new Lamb who would die for the sins of many and establish a new covenant. The evangelist quotes these passages to tell us that, in fact, this Jesus is the one sent by God to bring salvation to all, Jews and Gentiles alike. No one is excluded from God's love. Christ's death has paid the price of sin, and death, the result of sin, has forever been conquered. So intense was Jesus obedience to the Father and his desire to die for our salvation that, unlike the other criminals, he had already died, as the ancient Church Fathers tells us, from a broken heart - so great was his love for us.

But, how is this love of Jesus continued in time? Jesus love permeates human history until the end of time through the Church, his Body.

One of the soldiers  
thrust a lance into his  
side, and immediately  
blood and water flowed  
out. (John 19:34)

From ancient times, dear people, the "blood and water" have always been seen as signs of the two great sacraments of the Church: the water, the sign of waters of baptism, by which we

receive the cleansing grace of God and entry into the community of the Church; and the sign of the blood of the Holy Eucharist, telling us of the forgiveness of sin and our redemption by the death and resurrection of Jesus. To return to the image of the Fathers of the Church, the "broken heart of Jesus," through Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection, becomes for us all-**the Sacred Heart of Jesus.** Thus, we can understand why the Church employs the readings from Hosea and Paul to Ephesus:

My heart is overwhelmed;  
my pity is stirred. I  
will not give vent to my  
blazing anger, I will not  
destroy Ephraim again;  
for I am God and not man,  
the Holy One present  
among you; I will not let  
the flames consume you.

(Hosea 11: 8-9)

Now, therefore, through the  
church, God's manifold wisdom  
is made known,...carried out  
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Ephesians 3:10-11)



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My Sisters and Brothers, all of what I said has practical meaning and implications for the Church - especially for this Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus celebrating its century of Christian faith. First of all, on the personal level the Church is the community in which the individual encounters Christ in a most explicit manner. In the Sacraments of the Church, Christ draws me into fellowship by Baptism, strengthens me for witness through Confirmation, nourishes me with the Holy Eucharist, forgives my sins in Reconciliation, seals my espousal love and fidelity in Matrimony, assures the perennial presence of Christ in Word and Sacrament through Holy Orders, and redeems my illness through Anointing; finally, when death knocks at the door of my life, the Church prays for my eternal peace.

Someone once asked, "Can I be a Christian without being a member of the Church?" The answer came, "Yes, you can, it is possible. It is something like being:

A student who will not go to school. A soldier who will not join an army. A citizen who does not pay taxes or vote. A salesman with no customers. An explorer with no base camp. A seaman on a ship without a crew. A businesswoman on a deserted island. An author without readers. A tuba player without an orchestra. A parent without a family. A football

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player without a team. A politician who is a hermit.  
A scientist who does not share his findings. A bee  
without a hive.\*\*

Secondly, from the perspective of the social dimension of the Gospel, the Church is Christ's instrument for evangelizing the world, for permeating human culture with the spirit of the Gospel. When Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, travels from one end of this earth to the other, he does so as a symbol of the Church. His sacred office is without significance apart from the position he has within the Church, as the Successor of Peter and the Servants of the Servants of God. So, too, with each of us: each in her or his own way contributes ones gifts, talents, energies and resources as members of the household of faith, to strengthen the witness of the whole Body and to reveal the loving and healing Heart of Jesus to humankind. With Saint Paul, we, too, can say:

To me, the least of all believers,  
was given the grace to preach to  
the Gentiles the unfathomable  
riches of Christ and to enlighten  
all men on the mysterious design  
which for ages was hidden in God,  
the creator of all. (Ephesians  
3:8-9)

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Dear friends, the Church - you and I - are the living embodiment of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the world. Our heart, like that of Jesus, must be as wide as the world, - loving all, including all, sharing with all, working with all, empowering all, respecting the dignity of all - regardless of ethnic origin or racial background, of gender or age or social status, of creed or nation. The Church, you and I, must reach out to all, welcome all, embrace all. In this way, the Church, in a living, active, and vibrant way, embodies the Heart of Jesus and becomes the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world."

My brothers and sisters of Sacred Heart Parish, during this centennial year you shall have countless opportunities to remember and to rejoice and to praise and thank God for all that has been accomplished through you. This centennial year shall also provide you the grace to look deeper into the Heart of Jesus and to examine your personal and collective conscience in the light of the Gospel. Just as in family life birthdays and anniversaries enable the family to both remember its strengths, recall its limitations, and improve the quality of its life, so also this church anniversary will help us all share the joy of a glorious past, re-discover the mission of the Church, and find new energy to spread the Gospel to the very ends of the earth. Through you, the people of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, may the

Church be a sign of unity and an instrument of peace.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is most present to us, dear friends, in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. May we find this Sacred Heart again as we gather around this Holy Table tonight. May we find at this Table the friendship of Heart of Jesus. May we leave imbued with the spirit of his obedience, sacrifice, and love. And, of him may we always sing:

I love the Lord, He heard my cry  
and pitied ev'ry groan.

Long as I live and troubles rise,  
I'll hasten to His throne.

I love the Lord, He heard my cry  
and pitied ev'ry groan.

O let my heart no more despair  
while I'll have breath to pray.

\*As found in Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, Songs of the Times, Assurance Publishers, P.O. Box 753, Rockville, Maryland 20851, 1982, #665.

\*\*Ibid., #677.

The Church of Saint Patrick  
Wellington, Ohio'  
October 23, 1988, 11:00 a.m.  
Annual Eucharistic Day  
11th Anniversary of Blessing of New Church

**"Lord, I want to see."**

Introduction

Eucharist: attraction to family as we entered the Church

I. The Scene

- A. Jesus on the way to the Passover celebration
- B. Main road going right through Jericho
- C. Custom: Rabbi surrounded by crowd of people and disciples
- D. Common way of teaching
- E. Every Jew over twelve who lived within 15 miles of the Temple
- F. 20,000 priests aligned to the Temple; many in crowd
- G. A glimpse of this bold Galilean ag the customs & traditions

II. Scene II - Bartimaeus

- A. Sat near the northern gate
- B. Heard crowds and felt excitement
- C. Made loud noise to get Jesus' attention
- D. Rude: interrupted crowds as they were listening
- E. Kept calling & forced Jesus to stop

III. Something attractive about the character of Bartimaeus

- A. Persistence and determination
- B. Response to Jesus' call was immediate and eager
- C. He knew exactly what he wanted: cure of blindness
- D. Strength of his faith

As one author puts it, [Bartimaeus in his approach to Jesus]  
"began with a need, went on to gratitude, and finished with loyalty  
- and that is a perfect summary of the stages of **discipleship.**"

IV. Today, you and I have come to this Temple for the Christian Passover and to experience again and anew the miraculous presence of Jesus Christ under the signs of bread and wine. Today ---

- A. "Lord, I want to see," we say.
- B. "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me," we add.
- C. You and I are **beggars** in need
- D. You and I are **spiritually blind**

V. Today you and I are drawn by and imitate those personal qualities of Bartimaeus.

- A. We come in **spiritual blindness**
- B. We come **in faith**
- C. We come persistent and determined
- D. We come knowing our needs
- E. We come with a readiness and anxiousness for help

**Bartimaeus is you and I. Bartimaeus is Everyman and Everywoman and Everychild.** Deep down we **identify** with the condition of Bartimaeus.

VI. And, deep down Jesus identifies, today, with us. Thus, we have this great mystery of the Holy Eucharist: Jesus reaching out to us, Jesus present to us, Jesus near us, Jesus helping us, Jesus in us:

Lord, at thy table I behold  
The wonders of thy grace,  
But most of all admire, that I  
Should find a welcome place.

I, that am all defiled with sin,  
A rebel to my God;  
I, that have crucified his Son  
And trampled on his blood!

What strange, surprising grace is this,  
That such a soul has room!  
My Saviour takes me by the hand,  
My Jesus bids me come.

Eat, O my friends, the Saviour cries,  
The feast was made for you;  
For you I groaned, and bled, and died,  
And rose and triumphed too.

With trembling faith and bleeding heart  
Lord, we accept thy love;  
'Tis a rich banquet we have had;  
What will it be above!

Ye saints below and hosts of heaven,  
Join all your praising powers;  
No theme is like redeeming love,  
No saviour is like ours!

Had I ten thousand hearts, dear Lord,  
I'd give them all to thee;  
Had I ten thousand tongues, they all  
Should join the harmony.

The Primitive Hymns, #245

VII. Dear friends, as we approach the Eucharistic Table today and celebrate this Annual Eucharistic Day, may we hear again the question the Lord Jesus addressed to Bartimaeus: "What do you want me to do for you?" Then, let us ask the Lord to cure us - all of us all over the world - of that spiritual blindness expressed in our disregard for the dignity of others, our pride and covetousness, our lust and anger, our gluttony and envy and sloth, our slowness to compassion, generosity, and sharing of ourselves and resources.

As we come to the Altar, let us remember:

We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God; let us hold fast to our profession of faith. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and favor and to find help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:14-16



The bread which you do not use  
 is the bread of the hungry.  
 The garment hanging in your wardrobe  
 is the garment of him who is naked.  
 The shoes that you do not wear  
 are the shoes of one who is barefoot.  
 The money you keep locked away  
 is the money of the poor.  
 The acts of charity you do not perform  
 are so many injustices you commit.

...St. Basil the Great

Introduction

1. GSU - falling asleep when teaching catechism
2. Effects:
  - 1) on students
  - 2) on center

Body

1. Gospel: Be on the watch!  
 Stay awake!  
 Be on guard!  
 Do not let the Master come suddenly and catch you asleep.

2. Corinthians
 

I continually thank my God for you because of the favor he has bestowed on you in Christ Jesus in whom you have been richly endowed with every gift of speech and knowledge.

3. Isaiah
 

We have all withered like leaves  
 all of us have become like unclean men  
 all our good deeds are like polluted rags  
 Why do you let us wander, O Lord, from your ways  
 and harden our hearts so that we fear you not?

4. Snoopy had broken his <sup>Right</sup> legs. Hundreds had written him sympathy cards and letters. Snoopy reflected:

"My body blames my foot for not being able to go places. My foot says it was my head's fault, and my head blamed my eyes... My eyes say that my feet are clumsy, and my right foot says not to blame him for what my left foot did." He goes on, "I don't say anything because I don't want to get involved"!

5. Lonnie Burton

*Appointed Time - only the Father knows: "You do not know when the a.T. will come."*

*Appointed Task - the closest knows*



We are gathered together to celebrate the dedication of a house of prayer. This is our house of prayer, but we too are a house of God. If we are a house of God, its construction goes on in time so that it may be dedicated at the end of time. The house, in its construction, involves hard work, while its dedication is an occasion for rejoicing.

What was done when this church was being built is similar to what is done when believers are built up into Christ. When they first come to believe they are like timber and stone taken from woods and mountains. In their instruction, baptism and formation they are, so to speak, shaped, leveled and smoothed by the hands of carpenters and craftsmen.

But Christians do not make a house of God until they are one in charity. The timber and stone must fit together in an orderly plan, must be joined in perfect harmony, must give each other the support as it were of love, or no one would enter the building. When you see the stones and beams of a building holding together securely, you enter the building with an easy mind; you are not afraid of its falling down in ruins.

Christ the Lord wants to come in to us and dwell in us. Like a good builder he says: "A new commandment I give you: love one another." He says: "I give you a commandment." He means: Before, you were not engaged in building a house for me, but you lay in ruins. Therefore, to be raised up from your former state of ruin you must love one another.

Dear brethren, remember that this house is still in process of being built in the whole world: this is the promise of prophecy. When God's house was being built after the Exile, it was prophesied, in the words of a psalm: "Sing a new song to the Lord; sing to the Lord, all the earth." For a new song our Lord speaks of a new commandment. A new song implies a new inspiration of love. To sing is a sign of love. The singer of this new song is full of the warmth of God's love.

St. Augustine  
Bishop of Hippo, Africa  
d. 430