

## Our Work Does So Much

One of the more familiar hymns we sing is “We Are Many Parts,” based on 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, where Saint Paul reminds his flock that there is one body with many parts. Elsewhere Paul speaks of how each one of us has various gifts; some in common; some unique; but each important for the building up of the body.

Over the past few weeks, I’ve thought about this quite a bit with some of the things that have gone on in my personal life.

As I’ve shared at Mass, my dad, Dennis, recently had successful triple bypass heart surgery. It came as quite the shock, as he’s in good health, exercises regularly, doesn’t drink or smoke, and there’s no real family history of heart problems. Thankfully the doctors figured out it was necessary before he suffered a heart attack or stroke. He’s getting stronger every day, and I’m so thankful for your prayers and support.

With respect to our body being many parts, my dad his whole life has been a hard worker. Working in maintenance in schools, he did what he did with such care, wanting to create a great environment for the teachers and students at the schools he was at. And in our home growing up, both mom and dad did what they did with such care too; whether it was making a meal, doing the house cleaning, or fixing up our first home in North Minneapolis. And of course, there is the work of parenting too, which both mom and dad took so very seriously, teaching us the faith and how to live it out in word and action. So much of what it means to be a Christian I’ve learned through them.

On a larger scale, I see how what they have done has made such an impact to our family and to the world, but also saw this unfold through my father’s health challenges. There was the surgeon who was a “seasoned veteran” but a man of incredible humility; calmly explaining things, even praying with our family before dad went in. I can’t help but wonder how many lives he’s helped save over his many years. But much like John the Baptist, he’s not one to point to himself; rather he does what he does to help give people hope and a new lease on life.

Then there were the people all around the hospital. You see a lot when you are in and out of a hospital, or waiting for about 7 hours in the same room. There was the young man who every couple of hours would wipe down seats with anti-bacterial wipes in an effort to keep folks healthy. There was the nurses and nursing assistants who would check in on dad, bring him some food, and take his temperature. There was dad’s cardiologist at the hospital who went over everything to help us understand what was going on. Each one of these people was important not just to my dad, but to so many people in the hospital. And though each job was different, it made a difference. The one thing I saw so often there at the hospital, and indeed through my 45 years of knowing my parents, is time and time again jobs done with great love.

I see this too now every day as a priest here at Saint Joe’s. So many parishes struggle with infighting and “turf wars” or factions; but I’ve never seen this at Saint Joe’s. Instead

I've seen a dedicated staff in our parish and school who care so deeply about the students and well-being of our parish as we strive to bring people closer to God on their faith journey. I've seen scores of willing volunteers who give of their time and talent to sing in the choir, prepare a funeral lunch, clean the church, count money, work a festival, or serve as a chaperone on a youth mission trip. Every day this spirit of generosity and the fruits of the labor unfold as I've seen so many great things happen here in my 7 1/2 years thus far here at Saint Joe's. Thank you for your hard work in helping our parish to thrive!

And so as we celebrate the unofficial last weekend of summer and set aside a day to think about labor, may we never forget that our work matters. The Church's "Labor Day" is the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker on May 1st (set up in part to send a message to the Communists who would use May Day as a way to glorify the state and the workers relationship to it; we rather focus on how our labor is done to glorify God and allows us to work with God in this world to make it better). Joseph did not say a word in the Gospels, but he did what he did out of loving service to God and his family, and through it did so much even if so little of what he actually did was recorded. And what an impact it had.

So on this Labor Day, thank you for all your hard work - for your families and for our parish, and never forget the wisdom of Saint Paul - that each of us as a part of the body has such an important role to play as a worker in the vineyard of the Lord.

God bless,

Fr. Paul