

October 1, 2021

Memorial of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face

Dearest Parishioners of St. Vincent's,

Christ's peace to you, and greetings and blessings from Rome!

Earlier this week I received the same shocking news you received of the allegations against Father David Huneck, a son of our Parish. I have no words to express how heart-piercing this is for all involved. It cries to Heaven for an adequate response, which can only come in time from the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and our union in prayer to Him. It is He Who consummately suffers these events, and He Who will redeem them.

These events do not leave us helpless. My sabbatical—now at its midpoint—has in ways beyond my wildest dreams (and worst nightmares) brought me face to face with how we must live our relation to Jesus Christ through and beyond horrific events and whatever choices others may make, or not make, that are beyond our control.

On August 18, a person driving erratically caused a cascade of car accidents which killed my 21-year old nephew Tyler Scheidt as he was crossing the street. In a single instant, and upon a single news report from my Dad, my life and the life of my family has been changed forever. At that moment, all the good that we had lived in the past seemed to become just a prelude to the present tragedy; and whatever future we might have imagined was slashed and ruined in a stilled heartbeat dead on the pavement. We now must live our remaining days on this earth through the flesh and blood absence of a young man whom we loved and continue to love as our own flesh and blood.

I am learning through these awful, changed circumstances of my life to bring my wounded emotions and flailing thoughts more promptly and relentlessly to the Lord, in a daily—even hour to hour—surrender that waits patiently and persistently for His response, which will in turn shape and transfigure my response. Part of the surrender this sabbatical requires of me is trusting that Fr. Jay, Fr. Polycarp, and Fr. Eric will give you the care of Christ the Good Shepherd in my physical absence during these excruciating days. You have my daily prayers that the Lord will continue to work fruitfully through their ministry to you. No matter what, we are Christ's, because Christ made Himself ours.

From the poverty of my geographical distance from St. Vincent's, I offer you two counsels as the fruit of my prayer:

First, I believe with all my heart that the Lord has given us to the care of St. Mary Magdalene and her Oratory of adoring love at our Parish as Heaven's providential fortress of faith for us as we pass through this trial. We are not alone at the Cross, and she knows by personal experience the path toward embracing the Risen One. Please go the Oratory of St. Mary Magdalene again and again to be with Christ in the Holy Eucharist, surrounded in the protective

and creative love of His friends, to receive our own particular share of the Lord's complete redemptive response.

As soon as my family received news of Tyler's tragic death, we were immediately surrounded by love—we knew we were not alone in our grief. Thousands and thousands of friends and acquaintances (and even strangers) spontaneously formed a network of support that brought the most unexpected and inestimable good from the harrowing grasp of death itself. In the piercing of my family's heart, the sharing of goodness which constitutes friendship triumphed, as our love was strengthened and deepened and expanded in ways we never imagined possible. In the wise and loving plan of God, the Church as a whole—and our Parish in particular—is to be the blessed place of ever strengthening, deepening, and expanding friendship.

Thus my second counsel is that in the weeks and months ahead we read together—individually and with our family and friends—the book *From Christendom to Apostolic Mission: Pastoral Strategies for an Apostolic Age*. Composed by a group of friends at the University of Mary in North Dakota passionately concerned about how Christ is to be known and loved in our confusing historical moment, I am convinced that this book will be decisive for the life of our Parish for years to come, especially in the formation and strengthening of the ties of friendship in the Gospel.

Only in friendship do we discover that we are not passive spectators to unfolding events in the Church and the world; we are active protagonists, made by God for this moment. As Pope Francis asks us most basically in the upcoming Synod on Synodality to engage more deeply what it means to belong to each other in the Church of Christ for the life of the world, I believe that *From Christendom to Apostolic Mission* will provide us at St. Vincent's both fuel and form for the Fire of divine love that the Risen Lord Jesus desires to blaze upon the earth. Upon my return from sabbatical at the beginning of December, I hope to explore with you what this might mean for us at the heart of our Parish.

As I enter the final half of my sabbatical, my heart is filled with more love for you than ever. In receiving the new graces of each day ahead as they are given, my joy at the prospect of being with you again only increases. Thank you again and again for your prayers for me, for my family, and for all of the most wounded members of the Body of Christ. Together the Risen Lord Jesus will make us, even through our unfathomable sorrows, bearers and sharers of His triumphant Love.

In St. Vincent's love of Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Daniel Scheidt". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid, with a large initial 'F' and a stylized 'S'.

Fr. Daniel Scheidt
Pastor