

## A View from the Hill

By Doris Brosnan

Just over a month ago, Doug Gunderson moved into Willow Creek Terrace, on July 6. Doug is a native Heppnerite who has been living in the St. Patrick's Apartments and maybe wanted to share his next birthday with a larger group of neighbors. He did exactly that last Saturday – Happy birthday, Doug, and welcome.

While the Covid-19 pandemic impacts our society in general, the residents at Willow Creek Terrace can generally agree that they are not feeling great inconveniences or threats. The months' long loss of face-to-face visits has, however, been strongly felt, so they are pleased that the latest mandate has relaxed the restrictions somewhat: By scheduling a visit, an individual may arrange for an outside visit with a resident, instead of settling for a "window visit." For this purpose, the Terrace has visitation hours from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. until 8 p.m., Monday through Friday, and from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. on weekend days. (Editor's note: However, this information may now be inaccurate as the governor has mandated that Morrow County revert back to Phase One as of Friday, July 31.)

Though window visits continue without restrictions, an outside visit must be scheduled at least two hours prior to the visit, to ensure staff time and availability to provide necessary screening, set-up, and resident assistance to a safe area. A call to 541-676-0004 can secure a visitation appointment and other information about protocols.

The current heat wave makes the indoor activities so inviting that negative impacts seem negligible. Again, the hair salon is open for use by the four beauticians who serve the Community on the Hill. Additional sports are being offered to the Wii players on Fridays, so additional participants continue

to show up for those activities. Bingo continues to dominate Monday afternoons and seems to be attracting more participants, enticed by the delicious-tasting prizes? And Uno now shares time with Dominoes on Tuesdays; again, increasing the appeal to more Residents.

Last month featured a new guessing game enjoyed by almost everyone. "Name the Staff Member" was the challenge, as six Staff members provided on the wall photos from their young days and a few tidbits about their pasts. One Resident identified five of the six, while about 50% accuracy was more common. This month, Residents will be invited to put their hints on the wall, and the Staff and other Residents will have a go at identifying them.

Last month also featured a social hour (with proper spacing) at which each resident made her/his own ice cream sundae. This month will feature another social hour, the refreshment yet to be chosen.

When the residents are not relaxing in their apartments, they have the several options of activities to take in, and they can also choose the morning exercises and discussions for their social interactions. This month's topics will provide opportunities to offer opinions and to reminisce: Respect for Parents; Friendship; Twins; Daughters; Vinyl Records; "Bambi"; V-J Day; Best Friends; Jokes; Poets: "The Wizard of Oz"; Women's Right to Vote.

The month will end with lunch outside, weather permitting – proper distancing, of course. The community might be welcoming a new person to the staff by that time, as an opening is available. Persons interested in information should contact George Nairns, 541-676-0004. As residents do with their new neighbors, they view a new face and personality on the staff with a welcoming attitude.

## Spiritually Speaking

# A Time to Encounter God & Fix Our Gaze on Christ

By Fr. Thankachan Joseph SDB, St. Patrick Church

Our county is gone back to the first stage again due to the increase of people who are affected by the corona virus. In last Sunday's readings, the Lord went to a deserted place to get connected to the Divine Master in order to achieve his full divine nature. As an electronic gadget needs to be connected to the power plug for charging, similarly, we can consider this time as a time for all of us to connect with our Lord Master a little more personally. We read the Prophet Isaiah, "Go into your houses, my people, and shut the door behind you. Hide yourselves for a little while until God's anger is over" (Isaiah 26:20). As we are faced with the pandemic lockdown again these days, it is an opportunity to encounter Him a little more in a personal way.

In next Sunday's first reading, we see the flight of Prophet Elijah from king Ahab after putting down the false god of Baal. Elijah fled from Israel to the southern region of Judah for refuge and he is sheltering in a cave. Elijah has triumphed over the prophets of Baal. But soon he realizes that Jezebel is after him to take revenge for the death of those false prophets. He longed for the voice of God. But the Lord asks Elijah to drop his idea of God and the way he expects Him to appear. So, Elijah retreats to Mount Horeb to converse with God. Elijah thinks that God would appear to him in a clamorous way, through the power of the wind, the earthquake, and fire. It takes some time for him to realize that God is not in those awesome events. He feels the presence of God in the gentle breeze. The message is that we need to get rid of our expectations to experience the presence of God in an extraordinary way. In fact, God comes to us every day through people, ordinary things, and events.

In the second reading, Paul, writing to the Romans, reminds us that no matter what bad times we may have to go through - as we are facing now with the pandemic - the people/believers in Christ, must remain firm in the faith and undaunted because we can be certain that even in hard times God is on our side. Paul explains to the faithful of Rome his conscience bearing witness to Christ. Paul bowed his head to this great mystery. Rather than question God, he made an act of faith and trust in Him, convinced that God loved His people still, and that in spite of their rejection of Christ, a day would come when they would accept Him. That is why the reading ends with a prayer of trust and of praise in Romans 9:5: "Christ is above all; may he be blessed forever." This prayer of St Paul will come in handy in moments of acute trial when we fail to understand God's plans, when everything becomes dark around us. It is nothing other than the prayer of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane: "Your will be done." (Mt 26: 42). Let us also, like Paul, submit ourselves to God's loving plans when things are not clear to us.

The story of Jesus walking on water appears in three of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, John). But, only in Matthew do we also see that Peter also walked on water! The miracle story of Jesus walking on the sea, together with the one that goes before it, the multiplication of loaves, shows that Jesus is Lord and has authority over all forces, natural and supernatural. The Jews believed that the sea was the domain of supernatural demonic forces. A rough and stormy sea was regarded as the work of these hostile spirits. By walking on the raging waves and calming the stormy sea, Jesus is showing himself to be one who has power and total control over these hostile spiritual forces. Do you know Christians who have surrendered their lives to the Lord but who still

live in constant fear of evil spirits, sorcery, witchcraft? The doubts that St Matthew's church is experiencing are expressed movingly in this Gospel. Jesus is praying to his Father. His followers are separated from him. It is night. They are in a boat that is battling against a rough sea and strong winds. All seems lost. The boat clearly represents the Church, while the storm represents the opposition the Church is facing. Jesus calls them and tells them not to be afraid, and then He comes to them over the water. When Peter tries to do the same, even he seems to doubt Jesus's power and in panic he sinks. But Jesus supports him, and then asks him, "Man of little faith, why did you doubt?" The storm ceases. Now all the disciples acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God.

When Peter "felt the force of the wind, he was afraid and began to sink." Matthew tells his struggling Christian community that even if their faith falters and they panic when they look at surrounding danger, Jesus will come and save them. This is good news indeed! A boat riding the stormy waves is a striking and well-known image of the Church. The Church is the people of God, and it is constantly being threatened by every possible negative influence. Right now, we are experiencing a storming situation in the Church due to the influence of COVID-19. An example is the first time the church was closed from all services during the Easter season. To those who worry about the direction the Church takes, Jesus cries out, "Get hold of yourselves! It is I. Do not be afraid!" Jesus did not intend his Church to remain anchored offshore, through the centuries. Rather, he intended it to ride the waves of history, serving the needs of people of every age, including our own.

As long as Peter kept his focus on the Lord, all went well. As soon as he forgot about the power of Jesus and worried about the wind, he began to sink. Perhaps, this is what faith means: Keeping our focus on the Lord, regardless of the turmoil around us, trusting that he is always near to support us. This kind of faith is more an encounter with God than it is a belief about God. It is more an experience of the divine presence itself, than an acceptance of the dogmatic pronouncement about it. What about us? Does this Gospel have any special meaning for us, for our personal lives? It surely does. There are times when the waves of misfortune - sickness, family tragedies, pandemic like Covid-19, financial problems - seem to engulf us. There are times when our Christian faith is deeply tried, and we feel like giving up in despair. Then it is that Jesus, who loves us more than we shall ever know, says to us, "Why are you faltering? I am with you always. Do not be afraid." Christ foresaw the storm and the grave risk His apostles would run when He sent them off across the lake. But that trial and the grave danger was for their own good because they learned to realize that He was from God and they could always count on Him. Our trials and our earthly ailments are also foreseen by God and permitted by Him (even if inflicted on us by a sinful fellow being) so that they will draw us closer to Him and help us on the road to heaven. May the Lord increase our little faith so that in all the storms of life we shall have our eyes and our trust constantly fixed on Jesus and His power and not on ourselves and our weaknesses

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