

From The Zucchetto

Last Monday on the way back to Dallas, Nancy said, “I can’t remember a time when I couldn’t wait to go to church and when I was sorry it was over.”

That’s exactly how I feel about the saints of St. Paul’s. What God has produced here, and what he will continue to give rise to, thrills my heart and soul. God is here at St. Paul’s. Do you feel it? Do you sense it? What you and I sense and feel is God showering us with his love, and grace, mercy and forgiveness. One can hardly get enough of it. Yet God wants to give us even “more”. And the “more” comes as we do some spiritual work on ourselves. Things like self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy Word, the Bible.

I begin this spiritual work every morning by reading the Bible slowly, at lay readers speed. As I read, I stop and listen to what God is saying. Remember, the Bible is the Word of God. What God says, the Bible says; and what the Bible says, God says. I don’t always like what he has to say. When that happens, I stop and talk to God about it. That’s what prayer is, just talking to God. Is he calling me to repent? In all likelihood! And I need to do a lot of that. And by the grace of God, I can do it. As I experience his forgiveness, my love for him grows as does my love for others including the most obstreperous saints among us.

Are there obstreperous saints at St. Paul’s? From time to time everyone of us falls into that category. The test of love is this: will we give each other space, will we just back off, bite our tongue and be as gracious with each other as Jesus always is with us? If Jesus was physically present to us today, would he ever scold us or embarrass us alone or, worse yet, in front of others? Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you. That you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (*John 13:35-35*) With this commandment Jesus establishes love as the defining trait of his Church, his saints.

And that’s what Nancy and I have found so exciting among the saints of God at St. Paul’s. And it’s that love, the very love of God, that will soon fill the pews with people who love to sing his praise and live according to his will.

Lord Jesus, teach us all to act firmly and wisely without embittering or embarrassing others. Teach us to love and care for each other as you love and care for each of us. Amen.