

Pentecost Sunday

This past week our staff visited with Father Andrés Moreno and Father Tom Holder to prepare Father Andrés for starting his work here later this month. We covered many topics: liturgy and devotions; upcoming dates for weddings, baptisms and quinceañeras; an overview of our finances; parishioners with special needs; and property concerns. It will be the first time that Father Andrés takes the lead in a parish, so we want to help him start well.

Bishop Johnston is appointing Father Andrés “parochial vicar” and Father Tom Holder as the “administrator” of St. Anthony’s. This week the bishop spoke to me about these titles. He hopes to let young priests have three to five years of experience as an associate pastor in a large parish before becoming a pastor. Father Andrés has been ordained two years, so the bishop wants him to have immediate access to a priest with more experience as he begins his work at St. Anthony’s. Father Andrés has completed a course in parish administration at Rockhurst University. He has already been working with Father Tom at a parish in Lee’s Summit. Father Tom will continue to support Father Andrés when he moves here. The bishop intends to give Father Andrés the title “pastor” fairly soon, but he thinks it more prudent to start this way. You won’t see much of Father Tom Holder, but they will both come to the next meeting of our finance council.

When I arrive at the cathedral, the bishop is giving me the title “pastor”. In the past, the priest in charge over there has been called the “rector” because the bishop is commonly considered the pastor. But the canon law of the Catholic Church indicates that a priest in charge of any parish is called the pastor, not a rector. They’re actually painting over the word “rector” on my parking space at the cathedral before I move in this month.

Titles indicate who we are and the responsibilities we have, but even people without titles manifest great gifts and skills. On the first Pentecost, the disciples gathered in the upper room for prayer, and the Holy Spirit came upon them all. Saint Luke says that the disciples first noticed the noise. A noise like wind filled the room. It reminded them of Moses on Mount Sinai, when the people heard peals of thunder and lightning, and a very loud trumpet blast. As Moses had gone up the mountain to encounter God and receive the law, so the disciples had entered the upper room where they encountered God and received the Holy Spirit. They didn’t get a new title. They got gifts. People from all over the world heard preaching in their own languages, and they came to believe in Christ.

Each of us possesses certain gifts that God expects us to use. Other people will come to know God through the gifts they see in us. Sometimes we are timid. We don’t want to share our gifts, or we think our gifts are too small to matter, or we are too lazy to offer guidance to others. We may not always succeed as the disciples did. But God expects us to try. Michael Jordan once said, “I can accept failure, everyone fails at something. But I can’t accept not trying.”

This Pentecost, let us reflect not just on our titles, but on the gifts that God gave us. Why did God make us the way that we are? Why did God put us in this time and place? What is God expecting me to do? When we use our gifts in the presence of others, they can meet the giver: God himself.

SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 2017