

## Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

I'd like to thank all of you for your warm welcome to St. Anthony Catholic Church. Even though I am still unpacking boxes across the street, this already feels like a homecoming for me. I grew up in Kansas City as a member of St. Therese Little Flower Church just a few miles south of here. While I was in the seminary I became friends with Father Ambrose Karels, and I often visited him in the attic of the Assumption Rectory. During my 33 years as a priest, I have served as pastor in two other parishes, St. John Francis Regis in south Kansas City, and St. Munchin in Cameron, with its mission St. Aloysius in Maysville. Eleven years ago, right after Bishop Boland appointed me to become pastor there, Father John Hix had to retire from St. Aloysius in Kansas City due to ill health. I told Bishop Boland that if that had happened before he asked me about going to Cameron, I might have been interested in becoming pastor of St. Aloysius in Kansas City. I even spoke with Father Hix about it, not realizing that 11 years later I would have the opportunity to serve the people of his parish church under another name.

We priests move around from time to time, so we are better off if we don't own many possessions. But I own too many. I play classical music, so I have a grand piano and a pipe organ. I write books and articles, so my library is large. I own workout equipment. It's hard work for me to move. So when I get to a new place, I want to stay a long time. Transfers are difficult on everyone - priests and people alike. We form strong relationships, and we grow comfortable with our routines. Your home is a place where you feel stable, but every home is away from someone else. It creates a desire that someone would move. We like it when things stay the same, but they rarely do. We all undergo changes in our families, our workplace, and our health, and not all of these changes are pleasant. So even when we feel most at home, we are never completely at home. St. Paul applies this to our relationship with God. He writes to the Corinthians, "while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord." Our true home is not in this life, but in the next, and we await it with hope. Paul goes on to say, "we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord." However, while we are here, we have work to do on behalf of the Lord. We walk by faith, not by sight, and we aspire to please God whether we are at home or away.

Saint Anthony certainly experienced this longing for home. He was born in Portugal, felt called to the missions in Morocco, shipwrecked in Sicily, and ended up in Padua, where he became famous as a preacher. He knew the bible well, and he could present complicated teachings in simple language. That is perhaps why we see images of him holding a book on which sits the Christ child. Anthony held the Word of God and preached the Word of God, so people heard the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. When people heard Anthony preach, they reformed their lives. They reconciled with one another. They returned stolen property. They forgave debts. As families behave in their homes, Christians should all treat one another. Most of us think of Anthony when we have lost something, but the one thing he probably most wants us to find is Christ in the Word of God.

My brothers and sisters, during our time together, we will find Christ in one another and especially in our homes. Christ will appear to us in simple things, even in things we hold in our hands, if we open our hearts to receive his word.