

In the past two weeks five of our parishioners have died: Bernie Enright, Pat Holman, Anna Gerhards, Victor Pycior, and Lou DeFeo. They have all been outstanding individuals and will be missed deeply by their family, friends, and all of us at St. Regis. It's unusual for us to lose so many people at once, and I mention it to you because you could have someone in your pew who's grieving the loss of a special person.

We all rely on certain constants in our lives: pillars we can lean on for support. Our families, our friends, our homes, our jobs are things we really depend on.

The tragedy comes when one of those pillars cracks, or even disappears. Something or someone we thought would always be there isn't any longer. Sometimes the pillar that cracks is an assumption we make about the world around us. Some of these are fairly minor: We assume, for example, that the car will always start in the morning. We assume that we can always drive comfortably on James A. Reed Road. We assume that iceberg lettuce will always be 79 cents a head. Then one day it's not, and a pillar cracks.

But many of our assumptions are bigger. We assume our parents will always be there. We assume we'll always have good health. We assume that seat belts don't really matter. Then one day they do, and a pillar cracks.

Sometimes we get new pillars: a new friend or a new job, ^{or a new-} ^{strength} Sometimes the pillars grow inside us: You quit smoking. You get engaged. You keep your cool for once in your life. We discover inside us a ~~new~~ strength, a new power that we never knew we had before.

This is what 72 disciples discover in today's Gospel. They have a new pillar, a new strength inside them, and it's a biggie: They have power over demons. They can cure the sick, heal the mentally disturbed. They look at their hands and they see that they have superhuman power. You realize what that means to the forces of evil in Gotham City? The disciples have more clout than Batman.

They are thrilled, as you can imagine. They come skipping back to Jesus in jubilation. "This is great!" Do you know that feeling? It's the feeling you get after a hole-in-one, after you get the loan; after your kids finally realize you were right. And you feel invincible, like you can do everything.

And then Jesus says something wise. He says, "It's true, you have superhuman power. You've got self-confidence, you've got great friends, you've got pillars to lean on. But they're no big deal. They can all crack. Don't rejoice in your power, rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Rejoice that God knows your name. Rejoice that God loves you by name. Rejoice that you have one pillar which surpasses all the others, a pillar which will never crack, never disappear."

My sisters and brothers, we may lose our pillars one by one and we will grieve, rightly so. But we will never despair, for our names are written in heaven.