

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This past Saturday, February 8th, Father Kyle led a Confirmation retreat for our parish youth who will be confirmed on Friday, March 20th by Very Reverend Stephen H. Howell, the Vicar General of the Archdiocese and friend to many of our parish families. In addition to Father Kyle, our Confirmation Leadership Team, including Ronnie Guisti, Karen Chang, Donna Schreiber and Tom Cortopassi, guided the youth through a series of activities, including viewing a documentary called "The Human Experience." This film helped them to reflect and consider the joys and sorrows of life, its challenges, and how grace and the Holy Spirit are essential components to living a joy-filled, happy, and Christ-centered life.

There was also an afternoon panel discussion led by Luca Schrammel, Timmy and Samantha Yee, Karen Chang and Tom Cortopassi. The theme of this discussion centered on the importance of faith at various stages of life. The day concluded with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and a concelebrated Mass. The retreat took place at the Maryknoll Center in Los Altos. This is a beautiful place for prayer and there was plenty of space for the youth to run around and enjoy recreation. I am grateful to Father Stephen Judd, M.M., the superior of Maryknoll, and their staff. They made us feel most welcome and I look forward to hosting other parish events at this spectacular jewel right in our own backyard!

On February 5th, I had the privilege of celebrating the "Foundress Day" Mass for the high school and elementary school students of Notre Dame in Belmont. The Mass honored two very courageous and heroic women: St. Julie Billiart, foundress of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, and Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN, a member of this congregation. Sister Dorothy was a missionary for Ohio who lived in the Amazon region of Brazil from 1966 until her murder in 2005. Sister Dorothy had a fierce devotion to the indigenous peoples of this region, who were subjected to human rights abuses by the area's landowners and logging industries. As a member of the Pastoral Land Commission, Sister fought for basic human rights for people who were exploited and mistreated. She was assassinated for standing up for those who could not do so for themselves.

In my homily, I quoted from three Sisters of Providence who had undergone an extensive reflection of Sister Dorothy's life and impactful ministry. "We were deeply and powerfully inspired by Sister Dorothy's life. She was totally one with the poor, not only in her ministry, but in her lifestyle, living as they lived. Furthermore, she didn't just do things for those she served, but helped them to find their own voice against injustice. Her compassion was a compassion that would be satisfied only when justice prevailed in the rainforest and human rights were respected. This puts in perspective those petty things we might allow to get us down, while speaking courageously to such overwhelming injustice and knowing her life was in danger, she still lived with an amazing spirit of joy in life. How does one transform that much negative energy and chaos into such joy? Was this her prayer-life, connection with God who is LOVE that enabled her to withstand such chaos and to carry the cross with such joy? Her life calls us to be more deeply dedicated to standing with the poor, to be aware of and stand with the poor in whatever ministry we do. We all have the ability to be that prophetic person." AMEN!

Fr. Tom