

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we enter this season of Ordinary Time, I want to once again thank all of the members of our parish family who worked so tirelessly and selflessly to beautify our sacred space during the holy season of Christmas. I was edified by the many, many comments of encouragement and gratitude from parishioners and visitors alike who were moved by the environment. The beauty of this sacred space also helped to elevate the solemnity of the feasts we celebrated this season: the Nativity, the Holy Family, Epiphany and the Baptism of the Lord. In addition to planning for such feasts, there is also physical labor that is demanded from our volunteers. I wish to publicly acknowledge those who set up and disassembled the decorations for our Christmas celebrations. They include John Philpott, Ryan & Stephanie Herbst & family, Evelyn Martin, Bob & Juliane Sullivan, Gary Castelli, Amador Maldonado, Raul Velez, Karen Chang, Griselda Lucatero, Bob & Nicole Beggs, Susan Manese, Brian & Adelheid Fogl-Tupper, Rosalee Cavanaugh, Barbara Mosso and Dolores LaCasse among others. Your tireless dedication is so appreciated, and you set an example for all of us of what it means to generously be in the service of others. We do all of this for the greater glory of God.

I would like to thank David Taylor and David Sawyer and members of the St. Pius Athletic Board and coaching staff who spearheaded the placement of championship banners in the Monsignor Fitzsimon Center gymnasium. Thanks also to Gary Castelli for his assistance. On Friday evening, January 10, we had the official unveiling of the banners. As always, David Taylor put together an outstanding presentation that got the crowd all fired up! We welcomed back former pastor Father Paul Rossi for the presentation and there were several hundred spectators as our seventh-grade boys defeated St. Catherine of Burlingame and our eighth-grade boys defeated Our Lady of Angels, also of Burlingame. "Friday Night Lights" has become very popular and I invite all of our parishioners to come out and root for our teams!

The readings proclaimed on this Second Sunday in Ordinary Time speak to the coming of the Messiah, the "Lamb of God" as John the Baptist ascribes to Jesus. Isaiah foreshadows the Messianic nature of one who comes to serve, to be a beacon of light whose ministry will reach far beyond the Jewish epicenter to the outer reaches of the earth. In coming to dwell among us as one who serves, Jesus will have to suffer, to lay down his life for his sheep. The image of the lamb that is slain goes back to the ritual at Passover. The lamb's blood marked on the doors of the homes of the Jewish people protected them from being harmed by their Egyptian captors. Jesus lays down his life to save us from our sins. John the Baptist recognizes the divinity of Jesus even as he himself exercises a spirit of poverty and humility. Although he himself played an indispensable role in salvation history, John the Baptist recognizes he is a vessel and an instrument which allows him to say with authority, "Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."

Tomorrow, throughout our nation, we take time to pause, reflect, and remember the remarkable life of the late Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Although he was felled by an assassin's bullet on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee, his vision and his truth have never diminished. While we as a society have made many strides in the areas of justice and respect for others, we have much more work to do. Let us pray for healing and reconciliation of that which continues to stain and divide our national character and pray in thanksgiving for all of the rich blessings we have received by being Americans!

---Fr. Tom