

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In Paul's Letter to Timothy, he encourages the Christian community to be stouthearted people of faith, reminding them of the power of the Holy Spirit given to them by the imposition of hands. This is a very powerful prayer invoking the power of the Holy Spirit upon the companions of Jesus. I have been reminded lately in a very tangible way of the power of this tradition of the imposition of hands. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "Often Jesus asks the sick to believe. He makes use of the signs to heal: spittle and the laying on of hands, mud and washing. The sick try to touch him, 'for power came forth from him and healed them all.' And so, in the sacraments Christ continues to 'touch' us in order to heal us." [1504].

The imposition of hands is exercised in the Anointing of the Sick (as well as Confirmation and the ordination of a priest and bishop) and I remind those being anointed that they are pilgrims on a journey. Invoking the power of the Holy Spirit upon them reminds them that they are not alone; they are united with Jesus in an intimate way but also with the whole Christian community who prays for their healing and wellness. As I explain this insight, there is often a calmness and reassurance that overcomes the sick person. This felt sense that God is truly present helps to calm fears of the uncertainty and unknown dimensions of illness and gives hope and courage in times of difficulty.

In his Apostolic Exhortation **On the Call to Holiness in Today's World, *Gaudete et Exsultate***, Pope Francis writes: "The first of these great signs is solid grounding in the God who loves and sustains us. This source of inner strength enables us to persevere amid life's ups and downs, but also to endure hostility, betrayal, and failings on the part of others. 'If God is for us, who is against us?' (Romans 8:31): this is the source of the peace found in the saints. Such inner strength makes it possible for us, in our fast-paced, noisy, and aggressive world, to give a witness of holiness through patience and constancy in doing good. It is a sign of the fidelity born of love, for those who put their faith in God can also be faithful to others. They do not desert others in bad times; they accompany them in their anxiety and distress..."

These words of our Holy Father echo the response of Jesus to his disciples who ask him: "Increase our faith." Faith is a very powerful dimension of our relationship with God. In the midst of all of life's comings and goings, do we surrender ourselves to God's will for us? It essentially comes down to honestly answering this fundamental question: Do we trust Him? Faith is the key which unlocks all of the richness and possibility God has in store for those who capitulate in humility and hope.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Karen Elmore and the leadership team of the Women's Club. Last Wednesday's event was very successful and it was very gratifying to see a wonderful cross-section of women from the parish coming together to celebrate this great gift which is our St. Pius parish community. The re-invigorated Women's Club is the fruit of much hard work, organization, and commitment. Well done!!

Fr. Tom