

# HOMILY ~ 11th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## JUNE 17/18, 2023

In the Gospel Reading today, we hear Jesus calling the twelve disciples and giving them the power to do the ministry that he was doing, the ministry he was calling the twelve to do. I have come to understand that if we are doing what God is calling us to do, he will help us in different ways. He does not just help apostles, priests and religious. He helps all of us. Since the Gospel addresses calling the apostles, this gives me the opportunity to talk a little about the priesthood; and since I am celebrating my 20th Anniversary of Priesthood, a little about how God has helped me.

Just before I was ordained, I met with the assignment board; and they asked me what type of an assignment I was looking for. I told them I wanted to be at a Parish in Detroit where I could be involved in Christian Service ministry. Then I got assigned to Our Lady of Good Counsel in Plymouth. I thought, I guess this is where God is calling me to be. I met with John Sullivan, who was the Pastor there at the time; and I told him I wanted to be involved in the PBJ ministry. He said, *"No, I already have people doing that. You need to learn how to be a priest."* He was right. Two weeks after I started there, the Pastor went on vacation for two weeks. Before he left, he told me that he showed me how to do everything I would need to do except funerals; but he did not expect any funerals while he was gone. I had six funerals while he was gone. I went from anointing, to meetings with families to plan the funeral, to wake services, funerals and cemeteries. When I needed help, volunteers from the Parish showed up to help me. I did not know who they were or where they came from, but I was grateful that I got the help that I needed. The second funeral was for a 40 year old man who died in a car accident. It was a huge funeral. After the funeral, several people stopped me and asked, *"Aren't you new here? How did you know him?"* And I said, *"I didn't know him."* They said, *"The way you talked about him in the Homily, we assumed that you knew him well."* I thought, *"I guess I can do funerals."* God gave me the assignment I needed, the Pastor who would mentor me, the Parishioners who would teach me and affirmation when I needed it.

A year and a half later, while I was on vacation in Florida, I got a call on my cell phone from the secretary at St. Agatha Parish. She said, *"Fr. Jim, is there anything you would like me to get ready for you?"* I said, *"Why would you be getting anything ready for me?"* She said, *"Oh, they have not told you yet. You have been assigned to St. Agatha Parish because our Pastor is on a leave of absence."* When they finally told me from downtown, they

said, *“Just go there and be with the people for a while.”* When I showed up on the first day, the bookkeeper met me at the door. She said, *“We have all of these bills. What do you want me to do with them?”* I said, *“Pay them.”* She said, *“There is no money, and I think they are getting ready to turn off the utilities.”* I knew right away that I was going to have to do a little more than just be with the people. I invited Parishioners to meet with me and tell me their concerns. They lined up to meet with me every day. It quickly became evident that we were going to have to close, and the Parishioners knew this as well. The only message that I got from downtown is that they were not going to give us any money. I did not know how to close a Parish, but I knew I could figure out how to do it with the help of the Parishioners. Eight months later, we were closed. I think God wanted me to close St. Agatha Parish because the Pastor was so committed to the Parish that he would have had a very difficult time doing this. I also learned that everything I still needed to learn about running a Parish comes from the Parishioners, not from downtown.

The next call I got from downtown was to tell me that I was being assigned to St. Priscilla Parish because the Pastor was going on a military assignment. They said, *“We want you to pastor the St. Agatha people to St. Priscilla and help them to heal.”* I thought, *“I came into St. Agatha and closed it in eight months, and they are going to follow me?”* But they did. And then I could just be with the people and help them heal.

About five years later, Fr. Mike, the prior Pastor at St. Edith, died suddenly. I came to his funeral. I could feel so much pain in the Church. I thought, *“I wonder if there is something I could do from St. Priscilla to help the people of St. Edith heal.”* A few weeks later, I got a call from downtown. *“We want you to go to St. Edith and help them heal. Do not give us an answer now. Pray about it for a week, and let us know what you decide.”* I thought, *“I am not leaving St. Priscilla. I am very happy and comfortable here.”* But by the end of the week, I knew that God was calling me to come to St. Edith; and I have never been sorry for the move. It is a good fit for me, and I have all of you to help me figure things out. And you all know what we have accomplished together.

The last 20 years have been the best years of my life so far. I have never been sorry for becoming a priest, not even for a minute. I have never made less money in my life, but I have everything I need. I am happiest when I am doing my ministry. I highly recommend the priesthood. It is not always easy, but it is a good life.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim