

Dear Parishioners,

I am excited about the Parish Mission, which begins this weekend, because I know Bob Pfundstein well, I consider him to be a close friend, and the topic he will speak about is extremely important. We DO hold a treasure in earthen vessels, as the Scriptures say; a treasure of inestimable value. God has blessed our lives so richly we spend most of our lives not even knowing how deeply loved we are. Hosea 2:21-22 gives us a hint, though, where it says, *"I will espouse you to me forever: I will espouse you in right and in justice, in love and in mercy; I will espouse you in fidelity, and you shall know the Lord."* God chooses us to be in a loving relationship as intimate, long lasting, and life giving as a marriage between a husband and wife who are deeply, passionately in love with each other.

It is fitting that Hosea used that wonderful image of a marriage to describe God's love because his own marriage was really a metaphor depicting God's relationship with Israel. You see, Hosea married a woman named Gomer (Hosea and Gomer, can you just see the wedding invitations?). The interesting thing about their marriage is that Hosea was a holy man, a prophet anointed to speak God's word to the people of Israel. Gomer, she was a prostitute. Her purpose was to be a symbol of Israel, the nation of God's chosen people; a nation that failed to be faithful to the covenant God made when he freed Israel from her slavery and gave her a land flowing with milk and honey.

But Israel fell to the temptations of idolatry, adultery; she became rich off of the political forces of the day like bribery, unjust taxation and the need for more wealth, power and status. Israel prostituted herself; in doing so, she lost her way.

Several years after Hosea and Gomer were married, after the birth of their three children, Gomer went back to her old way of life, she was no longer faithful to Hosea. While everyone believed Hosea had every right to divorce Gomer he worked even harder to love her back into a right relationship. She was his wife, his spouse, his beloved and he would never give up on her. God would never give up on Israel. Even though life became very desperate for Israel God always brought her back to the homeland he promised her. God always saw Israel as his beloved spouse.

Like our ancestors in faith we are the espoused of *God* whose love for us can never be fully measured - even when we lose our way, even when we are not always as faithful to *God* as he is to us.

We hold a treasure; it is love. This treasure always grows in value the more we are willing to give it away by loving one another as *God* has loved us.

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel