

Dear Parishioners,

*So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love,
as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us
as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma.*

Ephesians 5:2

I am intrigued by St. Paul's encouragement to the Church of Ephesus to be imitators of God. Every now and then I see little children holding their hands out like I do during the Eucharistic Prayer, or the Lord's Prayer. It's always a joy to see toddlers just learning how to speak, standing on the kneeler with their heads and shoulders just barely above the pew in front of them and they try to pray just like they see me praying. Children are great at imitating others. They may not know exactly what it is they do, but they do it anyway. It is only later that they understand and then they decide whether or not the actions they imitate should continue.

St. Paul lived and proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Church of Ephesus; he showed them the living Christ present in the Word and Eucharist. Paul told them to imitate what they saw. As Paul witnessed the love of Christ to them he told them to go ahead and do what Christ did; he told them to hand themselves over as sacrificial offerings to God.

We too are asked to model our lives on the Gospels; we are Eucharistic People, members of the Body of Christ in the world. Our faith is so rich in mystery our minds can never fully grasp what it is we do. We are like little children and sometimes the best we can do is to imitate the Christ we experience in the world. In the same way Jesus handed himself over for our salvation, we are to be sacrificial offerings of love for our families, our communities, our Church, our world. In other words, Jesus gave with a generosity that can, at times, only be imitated and, if possible, perfected. The problem is that when we find it impossible to understand why we should imitate Christ we have to make a decision: do we continue, or do we stop?

As children grow they find out that perhaps it is embarrassing, either to themselves or to their parents, to hold their hands out like I do during the prayers at Mass. My hope is that we will always remember the importance of imitating the life of Christ in our daily lives as sacrificial offerings pleasing to the Lord.

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel