

Dear Parishioners,

Recently I went on a brief trip to New Jersey. I got to visit with my sister Laura and her husband Mike, as well as their five children. I'm not writing to tell you about the details of the trip, though. Instead, I would like to use the trip as a metaphor for salvation.

I chose to fly out to New Jersey because I thought the round trip fare would be cheaper than buying gas for my car. So, the airplane was my choice of transportation. Flying worked out well. It was convenient (but not totally free of difficulties), and I was able to get to where I wanted to go and back again. However, before I could even make the decision to buy the tickets, I had to believe that I would get there and that this trip was important because Laura is my sister and I love her family very much. So, it was love that compelled me to make this trip.

Perhaps we need to look a little more deeply into why we are members of the Church. In the same way that flying was my choice of transportation to New Jersey and back, the Church, and all she teaches and holds as true, is our means of seeking salvation. But, when we get right down to the heart of the matter, the Church is still our choice.

In order for us to make this choice, though, we have to believe in the reality of salvation. Our very first step is in believing in the infinite, completely unconditional love of God for us. In order to be saved, it is important for us to believe with every fiber of our being that God loves us, sins, character flaws, warts and all. This unconditional love of God is a gift given freely to us in infinite abundance, not just because we are Catholic and Christian, but because we are God's beloved sons and daughters.

So often, we make trips without giving much thought beyond the planning and preparation required to make the trip possible. We take it for granted that we will most likely get to where we want to go and back. Perhaps it's even true to say that we take our faith for granted, too. It is so much easier for us to believe in what the Church teaches about salvation and then follow along as best we can like passengers about to board a plane.

When we take the time to ponder why we are on this journey, though, we just might come to see that it's all about love. The infinitely abundant, unconditional love of God reveals the truth that salvation is not just our final destination, but is, rather, the fullness of God's love already given to us. Knowing we are so blessed by God's love enables us to make the choice to be Catholic and to love others as we have been loved by God.