

Column101820

Companions on the Journey

October 18, 2020

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the parishioners and parish family here at Saint Anthony's I would like to extend hearty congratulations to Saint Joseph parish in Ambler as it celebrates its one hundredth anniversary here. Please join with me in praying and wishing God's most abundant blessings upon their pastor, Father Gene Tully and all the parishioners of Saint Joseph's on achieving this wonderful milestone in the life of their parish. If you meet up with any Saint Joseph parishioner be sure to offer them congratulations and blessings on this special occasion. Saint Joseph's has had a special place in handing on our Catholic faith for this last century with a special calling to minister to the needs of Catholics from a variety of ethnic origins. It continues to strive to live and hand on the faith to those of this generation. May the Lord continue to shower his blessings upon this venerable parish.

We continue in Respect Life Month to address important issues that face us as Catholics especially in this presidential election year. One such issue has to do with how we interact with, relate to and respect those of a different ethnic or racial origin than our own. Right now voices are so loud and there is not very much dialogue or discussion going on. I hear a lot of raised voices with people shouting past each other but not really hearing each other. The way of Jesus does not espouse such behavior. But it is most difficult to really listen to what another is saying about their own experience without immediately reverting to one's own personal experience and presenting that in response. But we are able, with the grace of Jesus Christ, to listen to each other and not have to respond right away with our own viewpoint. We are capable of listening to what is being said, pondering the meaning and allowing it to have a life in my own mind, but on its terms. This is not easy to do but it is possible and desirable.

The importance of really listening comes through as a mark of respect. If I try to talk past you, to win my own point after you have tried to make your point, then we have not really connected. I am more intent on establishing my viewpoint. This is often at the expense of yours. But if I genuinely listen to what you are saying and try to hear the underlying truth (often a painful and personal truth) then what happens in you is that you feel listened to. Just that is a big thing. So often we do not feel listened to. So, when we do experience this, we recognize it as something different. By listening to what you are saying and allowing it into my intellect and my heart, I validate you as a person because I respect you and allow your viewpoint to be heard and understood. I may not always agree with what I am hearing but I am not trying to dismiss it out of hand. I am not trying to dismiss YOU out of hand. The listening is so key. The listening is the way we show respect. For the other. And when there is real respect that becomes the condition for the possibility of real discussion. Something our country definitely needs. Let's do what we can to lead the way in this.

**In the peace of Christ,
Msgr. McHenry**