March 18, 2020

Dear families,

Many years ago, I utilized the same retreat house in Doral for the Senior Encounter retreats. The retreat house was run by people and families that were a part of that community. The woman who worked in the kitchen was particularly kind, very loving and wise. Anytime I was running a retreat, I used to find time to sneak away and chat with her while she was prepping the next meal. I’d go in the kitchen to update her on whether we were behind or ahead of schedule. She’d always have coffee for me and words of encouragement and love. One morning, I must have looked particularly grim so she asked if I had slept well the night before. I admitted that I had not and that some nights, I would wake up at a random hour and would not fall asleep again, regardless of my exhaustion. Without hesitation, she told me that I was a very busy person, in the business of caring for and tending to the hearts and souls of others, and that perhaps God was trying to find time to tend and talk to me. I laughed and asked if God could find a better time than 3am and she simply responded that perhaps He could not. She went on to say that the next time I woke up in the middle of the night and knew I wouldn’t be able to fall back asleep, that I should try talking back. I have never forgotten this conversation with her. It’s been over 10 years since she said this to me and even as I lay awake writing this message to you now, I know it’s because God wanted to speak to me and consequently, to you.

Tomorrow is the Feast of St. Joseph. I’ve been thinking of him a lot this week, especially since I knew I would be writing to you all on the eve of his feast day. I’ve always carried a special love for St. Joseph. A love that was first instilled in me by my mom’s great devotion to him and then from my own study of St. Joseph. Little is written about St. Joseph. It is likely that he did not live to witness Jesus' public ministry and that he passed away when Jesus was still in his youth. One of the more widely known aspects of Joseph’s life is the story that is revealed in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke: that the angel of the Lord came to Joseph as he slept. In his dream the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, "Do not be afraid." We know that the angel of the Lord came to Joseph a few more times after that, but it’s the first message that I am drawn back to, often. The truth is, Joseph was afraid. How could he be entrusted to be the husband to the woman who would bring the son of God into this world? What role would he possibly have in all of that? Was he strong enough? Was he worthy of it? Did he even believe it to be possible? I am sure that these thoughts plagued his conscious and unconscious mind, incessantly. God heard his inner battle and He came to talk to him.

Now that I am writing this, I can see more clearly what my wise friend at the old retreat house was trying to tell me all those years ago. God will always seek us, even if that means at 3am or in a dream or at 6am with your morning coffee, in bumper to bumper traffic or even during a quarantine. God will never stop seeking us, but we have to believe that we are worthy of his persistence and love. I do not doubt that Joseph was afraid, but perhaps he was more afraid of his own unworthiness than he was of the situation itself. That happens to us often. It’s called “imposter syndrome.” Essentially, it means that we become insecure of our own potential, capacity and competency, despite the external evidence of it. In other words, we do not always see ourselves as worthy or good enough. This could have been Joseph’s greatest struggle — “Why me?” Why did God pick Joseph to take this on? We cannot possibly answer that. What we do know is that God does not call on those who are perfect. God perfects those he calls.

We are all called. God is trying to speak to us, to you, every moment. What is God trying to say to you right now? Only you can know that, but first you have to make room for God’s voice and second, you must believe you are worthy of that connection. God makes us worthy. We must decide to accept that truth. St. Joseph accepted it and then he followed God’s voice wherever it led him. That is the most difficult part; following God, even when we are afraid and uncertain. This is what many of us are experiencing now: fear, anxiety, sadness, frustration and uncertainty. It is faith that casts a light in the darkness. It is prayer and trust that give us hope in the promise of Christ that he would not leave us orphaned. The angel of the Lord tells us, “Do not be afraid.” Do not let fear speak to your heart. Make room for God’s voice instead.

Our community is sustained by the belief that God is with us and the Spirit guides us. God has also given us one another. Reach out. Check in. We are many parts of one body. “26If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.” (1 Corinthians 12:26). Daily Mass is being transmitted online. We have shared the link on the school calendar for our students and I would like to share it with you as well. Word on Fire has released a communication that they will be offering daily Mass for the foreseeable future. Click on the link (https://www.wordonfire.org/daily-mass/) to participate in the daily Mass, at any time. Also, Decades for Daughters, a rosary group led by some of our Carrollton parents, is also meeting virtually or by phone, once a week. Please contact Lissette Conde Diaz (decadesfordaughters@gmail.com) if you would like to be included in the email chain for up to date information regarding Decades for Daughters.

I realize this email is lengthy. I guess God had a lot to say to me, and I to you. God is calling us all to lean on each other and on Him during this uncertain and challenging moment. I have often asked God for clarity in moments like this. I think I struggle when things deviate so drastically from my norm. However, just yesterday a friend reminded me that when we are stuck asking God “Why me or why this?” we should change it to “What for?” What is the lesson here? What is the silver lining? What have we learned? I have seen the best in people (and the best memes) during the past week. I have seen a faculty shift into full on, virtual teaching without missing a beat. I have seen the faces of my students on my computer screen and felt more love and certainty of my vocation than ever before. I have seen a community of people accompanying and supporting one another as they each navigate this situation in their own way. I don’t know why this, but I know what I’ve learned and seen and experienced because of it. St. Joseph is the...
patron saint of the Universal Church, amongst other things. Let us ask for his intercession and pray that he lifts all our hopes and intentions to the ear of God. St. Joseph, pray for us.

Sincerely,

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