

Dear Friends,

There are a few times when St. Paul speaks directly to the community to which he is writing and tells them what to focus on, what is the will of God for him or the community at that moment, and place in their relationship with God and with each other. This weekend we have one such line from his letter to the Philipians 3:13-14.

Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus.

We are on the last stage of our Lenten journey. This is the last week before Holy Week. Early this week, the statues will be covered and all the images (other than the windows) that remind us of Jesus and the saints will be hidden from our eyes. The environment is changed significantly. This signals to us that something is different. As we search for the images that remind us that Jesus and the saints are always with us here, we are forced to look inwardly. Jesus wants to lead us on a journey to the depths of our heart so that He may heal those bad memories that discourage us and distract us from the glory that lies ahead.

Last Monday, April 1, was my cousin Garrett's birthday. He's been gone now for six months. Remembering him reminds me of a quote that I first heard from Archbishop Sartain at a funeral by St. John Chrysostom, "*Those that we have loved and lost are no longer where they once were. They are everywhere that we are.*" As we hold their memory dear, they remain in our hearts. They continue to speak to us and to draw us on to where they are. Although sorrow is a part of the memory, so also the joy of their presence.

At the Last Supper, when Jesus took the chalice in His hands and blessed it, He said, "*Take this all of you and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant which will be shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. **Do this in memory of me.***" At each Mass, we remember the passion and death of our Lord. We also remember His presence in our lives. We give thanks for all that He has done and is doing for us. And as we remember the past, it becomes present. The Kingdom of Heaven breaks into our lives and Jesus abides in our hearts. The resurrection becomes a reality that then draws us on to heaven where Jesus, Our Lady, and all the saints are waiting for us.

I encourage you to look inwardly this week to remember the images and signs of God's love in your life. As we fast from the beautiful reminders of our beloved friends that have gone before us to heaven, may it heighten our longing to be with them forever, as with St. Paul, we strain forward to what lies ahead.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Jack D. Shrum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Fr. Jack D. Shrum
Pastor