

5th Sunday Easter

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May 10, 2009

Digging for the new church began on Tuesday, and about two hours into the excavation, the bulldozer hit a "clunk." Oh, no. An oil tank, an Indian burial mound, a Cruise Missile. Turned out to be an old septic tank. (Don't think about that too much!)

I think a lot these days about the new church, and about how our parish will respond to this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, only 29 weeks away. Are we becoming spiritually prepared for the new worship space? Are we getting any closer to Jesus, which is of course why our parish exists in the first place? A shiny new building that is not filled with the Risen Jesus Christ isn't worth building, is it? We need a parish full of folks who are united to Jesus, like branches to a vine. People who deeply believe, actually pray, and really love.

I have a poem for you today. It's by Mary Oliver. It's called "Praying."

It doesn't have to be  
the blue iris, it could be  
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few  
small stones; just  
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don't try  
to make them elaborate, this isn't  
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which  
another voice may speak.

We don't need to be like Saul (or Paul), who had an extraordinary vision of Jesus while on the way to Damascus. We don't have to be like St. John, the Beloved Disciple who laid his head

across our Lord's breast at the Last Supper. We don't need to be without any sin or be a great mystic.

But we do need to pray outside of Sunday Mass. We need regular contact with Jesus. We have a soul, and our soul needs to be nourished by contact with the divine, with God. If we are not connected in a real way to God, we very easily become empty, fragmented, and vulnerable to all sorts of substitutes for the divine.

The construction diagrams are in place: we know how to construct the building. In John 15, Jesus tells us how to prepare our hearts: "Remain in me, as I do in you. No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine, can you (or the parish) bear fruit apart from me. I [Jesus] am the vine; you are the branches."

Less than six months to pray before Dedication Sunday. We can do that. Will you join me in making that commitment? It's not so hard: (repeat poem by Mary Oliver)