

Good Morning,

--A quick preface before I get to the heart of what I have been invited to speak to you about today--

As you sit in the pews, I want you to honestly ask yourself:

**"Why am I here today?"** And don't worry, I'm not talking about the great existential question of "Why are we here?" -- Fr. Craig did not give me the time to discuss, nor do I feel I have the authority to discuss such things-- But what brings you to St. Ignatius? Community? Giving Thanks? A need for some spiritual renewal? Obligation? Perhaps you're visiting and this was the closest parish to where you're staying, or this is where your friends and family attend. Regardless, something has brought you here today, and for most of us here, that something has us coming back week to week, building the communal body of Christ, here at St. Ignatius. So whatever your reason, thank you for being here, and we will come back to that question in a little bit.

For those who don't know me, my name is Mike Moore, my family and I have been coming to St. Ignatius since Christmas of 2015, our first winter here in Portland. Our daughter is a proud Gator at our wonderful school, and I currently sit as the chair of the

School Advisory Council. The community and ministries-- the school being its largest-- are what drew us to St. Ignatius. We felt right at home the second we walked through the doors that first Christmas Eve. The warm welcome we received from people who had no idea who we were. The way Children were included in the celebration, Father John dressed in his 'St. Nick' vestments, the smile Fr. Craig gives you when you come through the communion line, as if he has known you for years-- Everything was genuine, and you could tell this was a very special, and valued place.

Nearly six years later, as we've become more familiar with the Parish, our appreciation has only grown. From the school kids combining their academics, and the gospel message in their service learning projects, to the efforts of our St. Vincent De Paul Pantry, to our Tibbets house for refugees-- our parent groups, our ministries like IGNITE, our liturgical teams that make all of this possible--- This is a very special place, indeed.

Now, something else about me that many of you may not know is I love film. Independent films, foreign films, big budget blockbusters and everywhere in between, I'm in. Throw in a giant lizard being used as an allegory for the environmental concerns and nuclear fears in Japan post World War II-- I'm smitten. Now while those who know me well will tell you, that I'm just

looking for an excuse to talk about movies-- but I promise-- at least in this instance-- it has a point.

I spent almost 14 years in San Diego, and when I first moved there I saw an ad in one of the weekly news magazines for a place called Citizen Video, advertising a library of thousands of genre-spanning films ready to rent-- my kind of place.

Well, after 9 years of seeing their weekly ads, I walked through the doors of Citizen Video for the first time and despite it being just slightly larger than the vestibule here, it delivered, as advertised, the secular heaven I was promised. I brought my carefully chosen DVDs to the counter, and proudly announced to the very wary looking person behind the counter, "I can't believe it took me nine years to come here, this place is AMAZING! Sign me up for a membership!"

To which the clerk replied. "I'd be happy to rent the videos to you but I can't in good conscience sign you up for our monthly membership-- we're closing in two weeks."

"Closing? How? Why?"

"Because it takes some people 9 years to visit us."

They said it with humor in their voice-- but the point was taken. I took this place for granted, and now it's gone.

Sometimes, I wonder if taking things for granted might be something inherent in many of us, especially if we are born and

raised Catholic; and I mean it in the most literal sense-- not in the greedy, ungrateful, self-centered sort-of-way that the term is typically thrown around. Think about it, we are born into this beautiful faith, welcomed practically at birth in Baptism; we grow, supported by those around us, we have rights-of-passage, in the Sacraments that we celebrate in the community. When we are sick, often the Church will come to us, to comfort us, and when loved ones pass on to their new life-- we comfort each other and celebrate them -- in the Church -- the Church is *ALWAYS* there, and that's why I feel that sometimes we take it for granted-- the ever present always is, right?

And while the presence of God and the Church (capital 'C') are perpetual-- our faith community, our church (lower case 'c') at St. Ignatius needs the support of each of us, to continue to do the ministries that bring us here each and every week.

Now-- before I unintentionally cause any worry-- I am in NO WAY implying that St. Ignatius is in danger of suffering the same fate as a video store I'm lamenting nearly a decade later. Not by a long shot. However, we did get a taste of what that might be like, due to the COVID pandemic, didn't we?

The doors to the Church were closed, leaving us unable to share in the Sacrament as a community. The school shut down quickly,

unsure of when it would open again. Many of our ministries had to take a backseat, or evolve how they worked, for the good of public health. But we as the community of St. Ignatius persevered. Mass was brought into our homes. Ministries that could continue, were often done with just a couple volunteers at a time, due to social distancing. The educators here quickly pivoted, and over a long weekend, had school up and running online, so our students could continue their education, and see some familiar faces, even if it was on a screen. Where possible, many of our beloved, annual traditions were moved to a virtual space. And we as a Parish were able to continue these efforts, because our community, though physically separated, still came together to support this parish that we love. And yes-- that includes financial support.

Today, as we continue to slowly come out of the pandemic, and things slowly return to what we would once regard as 'normal' I ask each and every one of us, to see this as a year of renewal, and for all of us to renew our commitment-- our financial commitment to our Parish. Jesuits, as I've learned, love to use the term discernment, and it's a process that they take very seriously, and as we've come out of the pandemic, I've seen some serious discernment happening in our community. The Pandemic has caused many of us to question our work and home lives, how we spend our time, and what we truly value. Taking the time, and

seizing that opportunity to take a breath, and allow ourselves the opportunity to think, pray, and consider is a wonderful thing. Today, and over the next week, take the time to discern what works for you to show your financial support to St.

Ignatius.

Today, we heard stories about two different women, who gave literally all that they had, because they had the faith that God would provide. And while these readings are inspirational, and ones that I'm sure many of us have heard before--conveniently on Stewardship Sunday-- I understand that many of us are not in the desperate situations that we heard about today. Our society and culture is much different than it was halfway around the globe, 2000 years ago. We have a very odd job market, mortgages, loans, tuition, other day-to-day bills, and other financial pressures. Which is why I am not here to ask you to hand your bank accounts over-- but I am asking you to take inspiration from our readings today, take a leap of faith and ask what you can give to our community. Maybe ask if you could stretch yourself, even just a little bit further, than you have in previous years. For some of us, that might be easier than it is for others. For some, that might mean putting something in the collection basket, or downloading the realm app--and using it-- for the first time. And for some, understandably, it might just not be possible-- which is why it is important that those of us that can-- that

choose and are proud to say that we come to a parish that prioritizes the ministries of taking care of those who have fallen on hard times, social justice, the environment and the education of our children-- continue to give.

As I said, earlier, as a parent, I'm often thinking about the future, and if what I see around here at St. Ignatius is any indicator, the future is bright. Our kids are intelligent and compassionate. Our staff and volunteers have no shortage of ideas, commitment or will to take what we already do so well, to the next level. But to make these visions possible, we need to commit today.

Finally, let's get back that question I asked earlier-- What brings you here? Why do the great majority of us here right now, choose to be a parishioner at St. Ignatius? Why is this community important to you? With that in mind, take the time to discern how you will support your parish-- our parish-- this coming year.

For those of you visiting-- I'm hoping you experienced the same warmth that my family did when we first came here. I'm sorry if you've felt a little left out since I've been up here-- please

know that's not my intention, but I hope I said *something* for you to consider that you may take back to your home parish. And when you get the chance-- come back, it would be nice to see you again.

For everyone else, those of you that I know well, and those of you who just know me as 'Oh I've seen that guy around'... I am so grateful to be here, *physically*, under this roof, with you all today. Thank you for hearing me out.