

Pastoral Message: March 20, 2022

During our Bible study we reflected on these scriptures knowing that Bishop John Stowe will be with us this weekend and for our parish renewal on Monday and Tuesday. The reading from Exodus and Moses' encounter with God was the call that sent Moses and Israel on a journey to free them from what holds them back and oppresses them. The people of God would set out on a journey or common road. This scripture perhaps is relevant to our renewal in that our encounter with the Lord calls us to move out, to grow and change. Perhaps in our reflection as part of the synod, we are called to ask ourselves, as a church, what is oppressive in our structures and in our lives that hold us back from moving forward. I read a quote from Pope Francis this week using the image of our church doors. He says, "In 'revelation, Jesus says he stands at the door and knocks. But at times I think that Jesus may be knocking from the inside, so that we will let him out. The self referential church presumes to keep Jesus Christ inside and not let him out." As we begin this parish renewal, Becoming a Pope Francis Church, perhaps we can see ourselves as a people of God, as the gardener called to tend to the vineyards and fig trees around us. May the Holy Spirit move us, in the words of Pope Francis, to smell like the sheep in our culture, that the joys and sorrows of those around us may be our own. May we accompany those around us as a nonjudgmental, loving presence and enter into the messiness of people's lives that are complicated, like our own. May we see ourselves on a common journey with all people, and people that believe and think differently than us. Let us work with the Holy Spirit and be the servants in the vineyard that bring life and healing to this world, or, as Pope Francis calls it, our common home.