

Psalm 19:14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

1 Timothy 1:2 ...Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

“From Cradle to Grave”

Psalm 71:17 Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. 18 Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come.

Every now and then, someone will ask me, “Why do you like being a pastor?” There are times when I ask myself that too. Sometimes I think, “If I were a public school teacher, I would get time off around Christmas. I would get time off during the summer. Maybe I should just look into being a teacher.”

When I think like that I go back to the question, “Why do I like being a pastor?” One answer that I have come up with is this: pastoring is one of the few jobs where you work with people from cradle to grave. Some pastors phrase it this way: We hatch ‘em, match ‘em and dispatch ‘em.”

We meet our new members when they are light enough to carry in one arm and we deliver new life to them in Holy Baptism. If a pastor sticks around long enough, he can confirm the same child. He can marry the same person he baptized. In some sad cases, he might even need to bury a spiritual son or daughter.

From cradle to grave, the pastor nurtures his sheep. One former pastor of St. Martin, Pastor Speckhardt had this kind of

relationship with many of you grandparents. People often tell me, “Pastor Speckhardt baptized me, confirmed me, and married me.”

That commitment to nurturing Christians from cradle to grave has never changed at St. Martin. The pastors may come and go but the commitment to cradle to grave coverage has always been here.

Today, I want to thank the families that have made that possible. Without your support, pastors and the rest of our staff could not provide that kind of coverage.

Long term commitment is something that is sorely lacking in our society. Name a club: Rotary, Lions, VFW. They are all looking for new members. They can get people to attend but they can't get them to commit.

So when I see someone who has had a 49 year commitment to this church and school, I am impressed. That kind of dedication is the fruit of the Holy Spirit working in the heart. That is just what this church (and society in general) needs.

Look at our Scripture reading. God cares for us from cradle to grave just like a good shepherd should. God doesn't care only about the young like our society sometimes does. God doesn't care only about the very old. He cares about us from cradle to grave. He wants us to gather in his house from the days of our youth to the days when grey hair forms a crown of splendor on our heads. (Ps. 16:31)

That's true about worship. It's also true about education. Christian education doesn't end in confirmation. It's not just for senior citizens. It should be from preschool until you can no longer think at all. In fact, the reason Christians have always emphasized the written word is because reading Scripture is central to our faith.

While Christian education is for everyone, this psalm points out an important role that grandparents have. Elders are called on “to declare (God’s) power to the next generation.” You have a role to make sure that your children and grandchildren continue on the right road. You have influence and you shouldn’t be afraid to use it.

Finally, I want to say a word about the staff at St. Martin. The high quality Christian education that your grandchildren enjoy doesn’t happen by accident. It takes hours and hours of extra work. The work of our teachers and principal goes on morning, noon and night. I can’t count the number of times I see our staff working here late at night and remember to myself that they have to be here at 7:00 most mornings. I want to thank them for their dedication which often comes at the expense of their personal time and even their family time.

So to go back to my original question, “Why do I like being a pastor?” The answer is that I like to be a pastor because I get to share Christ from the youngest child to the person knocking on death’s door. I don’t have just one grade like most teachers. I can work with people from preschoolers to people in nursing homes.

Keeping Christ at the center is my goal. It is also the goal of our teachers and principal. I know it is central to your lives too or you wouldn’t be here and you wouldn’t be sending your grandchildren to our school.

May God bless you as you grow in Christ from cradle to grave and beyond. Beyond because it’s not just to the grave that God cares for us but even to eternal life. God cares for us from cradle to grave to resurrection.

May that Easter peace which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.