



My Dear Parishioners,

Praised be Jesus Christ! In March of 1998, the music group Semisonic released a song entitled "Closing Time". I was nearing the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> Theology and I was so ready to be done with that difficult year. The song, "Closing Time" provided big time energy for me as I looked forward to the end. There's a line in that song which reads: ***"Every new beginning comes from some other beginnings end"***.

As we get ready to begin Lent, I invite you to consider what comes to an end. What is the change that God is inviting – for/from you -- this Lent? For Jesus, his time in the desert brought an end his hidden Life in Nazareth – with Mary and Joseph. Among other things, it required him to leave home. That is something meaningful to consider. The Polish artist Piotr Stachiewicz captured this moment in his painting entitled **"Our Lady Says Farewell to Christ"**. (The image is below, but it look up online for a better view.) Here, I share a reflection on this painting in the hope that in beginning Lent, you may also have the courage to put an end – bid farewell – to the things no longer needed.

Peace,

Fr. Rogers

This painting shows the tender moment when Jesus says goodbye to his mother and begins his public ministry. She strokes his hair and he kisses her right hand. A demonstration of the love and gratitude mutually shared between a mother and a son. Jesus' walking staff and water flask lie nearby, ready to be picked up and taken on his journey. A bird looks up, taking in the moment, and Joseph stands quietly in the background.

One of the things I love about art is that it can help us look at a situation with a new or different understanding. This scene of Jesus saying goodbye to his mother is not described anywhere in the Bible, yet the artist helps us imagine what it may have been like. I can connect emotionally to this work because I recall the goodbyes I said to my children as they flew the nest. Elizabeth Stone said this about having children: *"It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body."* If you are a parent, you know the truth to this statement. And even if you aren't a parent, you understand this sentiment—for to love anyone is to be vulnerably connected to their sorrows and their joys.

Jesus knew that this journey he was embarking on would eventually lead him to Jerusalem and to his death. For Mary, Jesus was her heart walking around outside her body.



The tenderness of this scene is a reminder that to love is to be vulnerable. Deep mourning is the result of great love. And like death, mourning is a fact of life. A hard reality we cannot escape. Yet we know that our Lord understands our sorrows because he lived them as well. Jesus was "a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief" (Isaiah 53:3). He is even familiar with the pain of saying goodbye to his mother. From the website: <https://laurieetta.com/saying-goodbye/>

**Father Chuck's Challenge**-This weekend Fr. Charles Kennedy will be speaking at all our Masses. He represents *Father Chuck's Challenge*, an initiative celebrating the memory and ministry of Father Charles Pfeffer, a deceased beloved priest of our Archdiocese.

Over the last 17 years, donors to *Fr. Chuck's Challenge* have provided over 1,500 safe, sturdy homes for the poorest of the poor in Nicaragua and Haiti. Fifty five new homes were turned over to families in Honduras last year.

Brochures are available at the doors with information on this outreach. Envelopes are included for your donation to be taken up in a special collection next week. Checks may be written out to the parish. Information on other ways of donating are included, including matching funds from your workplace. [www.fatherchuckschallenge.com](http://www.fatherchuckschallenge.com)

"Whatever you do for the least of My brothers, you do for Me." (Mt 25:40) 236

**ASH WEDNESDAY  
FEBRUARY 14, 2024**

**MASS SCHEDULE**  
**7:30 AM**  
**12:00 PM (Livestream)**  
**7:00 PM**



*"Even now, says the LORD,  
return to me with your whole heart,  
with fasting, and weeping, and  
mourning."- Joel 2: 12*

