

# Pastor's Letter

**September 7, 2025—23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Dear Church Family,

Our second reading for today is taken from the shortest book in the Bible, St. Paul's Letter to Philemon. As short as it is there is an amazing story behind it. A Christian man from the city of Colossae named Philemon had a slave named Onesimus who escaped and found his way to Rome. While there he came in contact with Paul who was being held there as a prisoner under house arrest. Onesimus himself became a Christian and helped Paul in his work of preaching the gospel. Here's where it gets interesting.

Apparently, Paul knows Philemon, the master of Onesimus. It seems that it was Paul who converted Philemon to Christianity. Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon with this letter asking Philemon to forgive Onesimus and welcome him as a brother in Christ. Paul even has the nerve to ask Philemon to set Onesimus free so that he can return to Rome and continue to help Paul.

Paul is asking a lot of both Philemon and Onesimus. He is asking Onesimus to put his life on the line for reconciliation with his master. A runaway slave could be punished by death. Even if Philemon didn't have him executed, he very well might end up back in slavery. And Philemon is being asked to give up his claim on Onesimus. According to the practice of the time, that made no sense. Slaves were valuable property. And Paul says he should welcome Onesimus like a brother. Slaves were at the bottom of the social ladder and Paul wants him to treat him as an equal. Where does Paul get the nerve to ask so much of these two?

Paul is only asking of them what Jesus asks of all his disciples; don't live according to the values of the world, but according to the values of heaven. Surrender your own will to the will of the Father. And what is the will of the Father? That we should be one and that we should love and forgive each other as he loves and forgives us.

This doesn't come easily to us. We are used to living in a world that encourages us to put ourselves before others. We're not used to putting others first or allowing God to call the shots in our lives. That goes against the grain of the way this world works. We need help to swim against the stream of selfishness. God give us that help. He reveals himself and his will in Jesus Christ and he strengthens us by his grace to be better than we thought we could be.

We don't know how the story of Philemon and Onesimus turned out. I hope Philemon forgave Onesimus. I hope I would forgive if it was me. May God give us the grace to follow him beyond the limited love of this world into the limitless love of heaven.

Blessings,

Fr. Scott

## **Journey of Faith—OCIA**

Fr. Scott will once again be offering the Journey of Faith class on Mondays at 7pm in the parish hall at St. Brigid's. This class is for anyone who would like to learn more about the teachings of the Catholic Church. If you are thinking about becoming Catholic, or know someone who is, this is the way to do it. If you have been Catholic all your life, but want to know more about the faith, this class is for you. Have questions? Great! Come find some answers. Classes will begin on Monday, September 8 and run through May 4.