

**For The Bulletin Of  
June 12, 2016**

**THE 11<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN  
SUMMER'S ORDINARY TIME**

*From Father Robert*

How many tears would need to be shed in order to have enough to wash feet? A bucketful! What would precipitate such an overflowing amount of tears? Extraordinary loss, sadness, sorrow. In the case of the “sinful woman” in today’s gospel, her tears were precipitated by her great sense of unworthiness and her profound repentance. All the woman’s gestures toward Jesus were very personal – weeping, wiping His feet with her hair, kissing His feet. Her gestures of touching Him were ones of connectedness, of closing the distance between alienation and communion, of desiring a new relationship with someone who heals.

The Pharisee’s response of indignation indicated how distant he really was from a life-changing relationship with Jesus. Contrary to what the Pharisee was thinking in response to the sinful woman’s actions, Jesus was indeed a prophet, for He was able to see into the woman’s heart and forgive her. He looked into the heart of the Pharisee, and saw there a lack of love. He saw distance. He saw one who did not wish to change.

This gospel depicts two very different ways of relating to Jesus. Simon the Pharisee related to Jesus as a one-time visitor, maintaining only a surface relationship having no power to transform him; he kept Jesus at a safe

distance from him. The “sinful woman,” on the other hand, related to Jesus as an intimate, avowing an underlying relationship that transformed her. Jesus revealed the depth of her transformation: “Your faith has saved you.” What is our relationship with Jesus? What does He say to us? Do we wish to be intimate and close to Jesus, or do we keep a protective distance?

The last part of the long form of this gospel shows us how effectively Jesus draws to Himself sinners and those weakened by infirmities. Repentant sinners and those healed by Jesus stay near Him. The women who followed Jesus were weak and sinful people who had been touched by Jesus. Their encounter with this Healer, this Prophet bound them to Him and each other with new bonds of freedom. No longer turned in on themselves, they were free to provide for others “out of their resources.” Loved by Jesus, they were freed to embrace self-giving that was a personal transformation setting them firmly on their own saving journey. Of such is our discipleship: to be touched by Jesus, to draw near to Him, to stay with Him. Jesus’ journey is one of healing body and spirit. Our journey is one of being transformed by His touch, His nearness, His saving Presence.

*Living The Paschal Mystery*

The Pharisee neglected to see Jesus’ need for hospitality and the sinful woman’s need for forgiveness and salvation. It is so easy to miss seeing the needs of others! Part of that seeing is to forget self so that we can truly encounter the other. Forgetfulness of self is freeing, allowing new ways to reach out to others with personal touch and healing.

If we are wrapped up in our own needs, it is impossible to see the needs of others. One way to live this gospel is to practice every day reaching out to another with a simple gesture of kindness or hospitality. This can be so simple as saying “hello” to someone we pass in a hallway, smiling at someone who seems depressed, or lending a helping hand to someone who seems burdened. What happens in our reaching out to others is that distances in relationships are closed, we discover in others unforeseen goodness and worth, and both they and we are transformed by this self-giving way of relating.

- Words and images that best capture my relationship to Jesus are...
- As my relationship to Jesus grows, I am being transformed in these ways...
- Jesus is saying to me...

***About Liturgy: Hospitality at Liturgy***

We usually think of liturgy and hospitality in terms of the obvious liturgical ministry. Greeters welcome us and help us feel at home. Ushers take care to make sure the space is well prepared and comfortable, and seat us if the church is crowded. Hospitality ministers helps us find restrooms, get help if we are ill, direct us to where the coffee and donuts are afterwards in the Gathering Plaza. All of this ministry is important. It helps us become a caring community and it takes care of our needs.

There is another dimension of liturgical hospitality, however. And this approach is much less tangible than what is mentioned above, yet even so much more important. Liturgical hospitality

includes all assembly members opening themselves to encounter God and each others, becoming transparent enough so that others can see us as wanting to be a part of this community, letting go of any expectations we might have with regard to how we want the liturgy to be celebrated. Liturgical hospitality is about closing distances so that we all might draw near to God. Liturgical hospitality might mean that we must quiet ourselves when we come to liturgy agitated over the pressures and demands of life. It might mean that we are willing to encounter the stranger – to greet someone we don’t know, to help someone who is disabled, to volunteer when the parish needs additional liturgical ministers or worker for social events or justice actions. Above all, liturgical hospitality means that we see in the face of others the Christ whom we have come to liturgy to encounter.

***Summer Reminders***

As summer is upon us, it is important to remember a couple of things: first, while we are fortunate to be able to go away on trips and vacations over the summer months, the bills and financial obligations of the parish do not. Please send in your tithes and offerings, if possible, before you go away in order to stay current with your Stewardship. If you forget to send it in before you go away, please be sure to make them up when you return. We count on the weekly support of all of our registered parishioners to sustain our programs, ministries, outreaches, and staffing.

Secondly, for the last several years, we have instituted “Aloha Attire” for Sunday Liturgy. This means that men wear a collared shirt and long pants and women wear shifts or flowing Hawaiian

style dresses which are appropriate for liturgy. We are coming to worship God – not going to the beach. Please dress accordingly and appropriately. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

***The Antioch Neighborhood Cleanup***

Last Saturday morning from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., our parish participated in the monthly Antioch Neighborhood Cleanup, which this month coincided with National Trails Cleanup Day. We met at the Water Park and cleaned up the trails surrounded it. I am grateful for the following who joined me: **Sharon Wetzel, Tracy Wetzel, and Steven Rojek.**

Next month's cleanup will take place on Saturday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>. Please watch the bulletin and/or my Insert for the site.

***Alaska Cruise Information Meeting***

This coming Tuesday, June 14<sup>th</sup>, **Linda Grelli from Black Diamond Travel** will be here to give the last minute information regarding the ten day cruise to Alaska August 9 -19<sup>th</sup>. For all those going with me, please be sure to mark it on your calendars and be present to receive important information and updates. The meeting will be held in the parish hall.

***Installation Invitation***

It is with joy and thanksgiving to God that you are invited to join our parish in the celebration of myself as the Third Pastor of St. Ignatius of Antioch on Sunday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 3:00 p.m. The Liturgy will be Sung Evening Prayer. **Father Jerry Brown, the Dean Emeritus**, will preside for the Installation and the homily will be given by **Fr. George Griener, SJ.** Clergy

from the Diocese along with Ecumenical and Interfaith clergy and their spouses will also be in attendance for this historic occasion.

The courtesy of a reply to indicate your presence at the reception that follows in the parish tent is requested by calling the parish office and leaving your name, telephone number, and the number in your family attending in order to help the caterer plan accordingly. Our caterer is **Louie Zandonella of Zandonella Catering** and he will be preparing appetizers plus a full dinner and dessert. Wine, water, soft drinks, beer, and champagne will be served as well.

**There is NO CHARGE to attend.**

In lieu of gifts, I have requested that donations in honor of the occasion be made to The Building Fund of the parish for the building of the new parish hall.

I am deeply grateful to **Marla Plurkowski**, the **Knights of Columbus**, and all those who are serving on the Installation Committee for all they are doing to make this a truly wonderful celebration and reception.

***Knights of Columbus Installation of Officers***

Our Knights of Columbus will be having their Installation of New Officers on Tuesday, July 5<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 p.m. in the church, followed by a reception in the parish hall. Please keep them in your prayers as they prepare to assume their offices and leadership of our Council. Our thanks for the outstanding job done by the outgoing officers.

### *The Deanery Pilgrimage*

Please plan to join us for our Delta Deanery Pilgrimage to the Cathedral on Saturday, August 27<sup>th</sup>. We have chartered two buses to transport 110 parishioners from the parish to the cathedral and back. Please see the bulletin for detailed information. The cost to ride the bus is only \$20 per person round trip.

The liturgy will be celebrated by **Fr. Mark Wiesner** who will also preach. Fr. Mark was commissioned by **Pope Francis** as a Missionary of Mercy on Ash Wednesday last year. The liturgy will be multi-cultural and multi-lingual. You are invited to wear dress/attire that is indicative of your culture.

We are also looking for people to participate in the liturgy who speak the various languages that represent the people in our deanery. One person from our parish who speaks Italian fluently has already come forth to offer to lead one of the petitions of the Prayer of the Faithful. Our Choir will be a part of a massed choir, consisting of musicians and singers from each parish. All the clergy from the Deanery will concelebrate with Fr. Mark and assist with the distribution of Holy Communion.

Each parish has been asked to create a banner representing their parish and which will lead each faith community up the Pilgrim's Path, through the Holy Year Doors, and into the Cathedral.

This promises to be a thrilling and unique experience. Please call the parish office and leave your name and phone number to reserve your place on the bus.

The \$20 for the bus trip can be dropped by the office, mailed in, or even placed in an envelope and placed in the Sunday Collection. Reserve your place now!

### *Thank You*

...to **Dilcia Aparicio** who faithfully and lovingly washes and irons the Sacred Linens each week.

...to our faith (and beautiful!) church cleaners: **Angela Bueno, Mila Rodrigo, Cathy Romeo, Mercy Osborne, Rose Salamanca, Carole Miller, Nancy Santos, "Jun" Bajet, and Steve Rojek.**

...to our faithful parishioner volunteers who clean and maintain the bathrooms in the church and parish hall each week:

**Bob Goncalves, Mary Ewing, Patricia Britton, and Harlan Young.**

...to our **counting teams** who are here every week to count the weekly collections.

...to our volunteers who assisted in the parish office last week: **Mary Ng, Harlan Young, Melodye Costanza, Karen Oliver, Alicia Perez, Rowena Cayaban, Joe Fanfa and Bev Iacona.**

....to our St. Vincent de Paul and Mobile Mall volunteers who transported last week's donations: **Bob Carvalho and Barbara Jackson.**

....to our faithful weekly bulletin assembly team: **Bob Carvalho, Carole Miller, Dave Costanza, Judy Quicho, Vangie Parrilla, Belen Farin and Dilcia Aparicio.**

### *Painting At The Rectory*

For the past several years we have been aware that the exterior of the Rectory was in need of being painted. The fascia boards (trim) were severely cracked and dried, chipping and the stucco had clearly been affected by the constant beating of the sun. When I was

Parochial Vicar at St. Bonaventure in Concord/Clayton, I met **Arturo Zarco of Zarcoli Professional Painting** who did all of the painting for the parish (the Rectory, Church, Administration Building, Large and Small Halls). His work was outstanding. He also painted the interior and exterior of Fr. Mangini's residence.

As time has passed and the list of maintenance projects was prioritized, it was hoped that perhaps volunteers could one day do the needed painting. There would need to be a great deal of sanding, crack-filling, and sealing of both the fascia boards as well as the stucco. The longer we waited, the worse the deterioration.

I contacted Arturo and had him submit to me an estimate to do the job and last week, the work began. He, along with his team of **Juan and Jose**, worked intensely for six days to complete the project. The colors remain the same ("Sage" for the stucco and "Cream" for the trim). The quality and professionalism with which they went about the work was outstanding and the price was reasonable. I invite you to drive by the Rectory to see for yourselves the exceptional painting job they have done. No parish financial resources were utilized in completing this project as an anonymous gift was given to cover the cost. Zarcoli Professional Painting is based right here in Antioch and their phone number is 925-628-4787. I highly recommend and endorse them for any and all painting needs, both interior as well as exterior.

### ***From Father Jim Bacik***

The Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* ("The Joy of Love"), officially issued by Pope Francis on the feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 2016, is a rich resource for constructive reflection on contemporary marriage and family life. For example, the exhortation includes: a collection of scripture quotes that illumine the nature and function of family life; a realistic assessment of cultural trends that challenge Christian ideals; a summary of Church teaching; helpful suggestions for a spirituality of marriage; and especially the widely praised fourth chapter on married love.

Media attention, however, focused more on controversial issues, especially communion for divorced and remarried Catholics. Pope Francis takes up that issue in a very subtle and sometimes ambiguous eighth chapter which deals with marriages that fall short of the Christian ideal. The pope describes the ideal in this way: "Christian marriage, as a reflection of the union between Christ and his Church, is fully realized in the union between a man and a woman who give themselves to each other in a free, faithful and exclusive love, who belong to each other until death and are open to the transmission of life, and are consecrated by the sacrament, which grants them the grace to become a domestic church and a leaven of new life for society" (n292). In a crucial move, the pope sees less than perfect marriages not as sinful but as partial embodiments of the ideal which are open to further development.

In the fourth chapter of the exhortation, Francis describes marriage as "the icon" of God's love for us, which makes of the "two spouses one single existence." The

grace of the sacrament enriches the love between husband and wife, combining “the warmth of friendship and erotic passion” in an “effective union that endures long after emotions and passions subside.” No married couple actually achieves all these marital ideals. No marriage is a perfect reflection of God’s love for humanity or Christ’s love for the Church. No family is totally effective in passing on Christian teachings and values.

Theologians and scripture scholars have taught us to see the New Testament as an eschatological document which proposes ideals that will never be completely achieved in this life but only in the next life of heaven. The kingdom is already here but is not yet complete. There are signs of God’s reign in the world today but the final triumph of divine grace awaits the Parousia, the completion of Christ’s saving work. Recognizing Gospel mandates as eschatological ideals protects us against a self-righteous attitude that we are perfect, while prompting us to strive diligently to move toward the ideal. The church’s task is to help us make progress on that journey.

Pope Francis has demonstrated his pastoral genius by placing his whole discussion of marriage within that eschatological framework of Gospel ideals. While recognizing that some unions contradict the ideal, Francis insists that others “realize it in at least a partial and analogous way.” The pastoral task is to discern, name and develop the grace already at work in partial ways. The pope encourages us to follow the example of Christ who gazed with love on frail human beings, who patiently guided the Samaritan woman to “the full joy of the Gospel,” and who

taught us not to cast off people but to follow “the way of mercy and reinstatement” which reaches out and welcomes all those in need. The Church should function like “a field hospital,” caring for the weakest who are wounded in the battles of life. The pastoral art is to help couples discern the next step they can take to move toward the Christian ideal of marriage.

Applying the “law of gradualness” proposed by Pope John Paul II, Francis recognizes that couples advance spiritually “by different stages of growth” as they gradually integrate the gifts of divine love and “the demands of God’s definitive and absolute love.” Pastors should enter into dialogue with couples to discover “elements in their lives that can lead to a greater openness to the Gospel of marriage in its fullness.” There is a “divine pedagogy of grace” leading couples to “reach the fullness of God’s plan for them.”

Francis applies this general pastoral approach to various “irregular situations” that fall short of the ideal. In examining “simple cohabitation,” unmarried couples living together, the pope distinguishes those who are opposed to anything institutional or definite, which is a source of concern, from those who delay marriage for economic reasons, such as the lack of a job or steady income as well as the high cost of a wedding in some countries. While recognizing that some unions “radically contradict” Gospel ideals, the pope notes that others are characterized by deep affection and the ability to overcome trials, “signs of love which in some way reflect God’s own love.” Without citing any data, Francis claims an increasing number of couples living

together request marriage in the Church. Pastors should welcome all such couples, guiding them “patiently and discreetly” to “the full reality of marriage and family in conformity with the Gospel.”

Turning to divorced and remarried Catholics, Francis recognizes various situations which defy rigid classifications and call for “a suitable personal and pastoral discernment.” Some second marriages have been “consolidated over time,” with new children, proven fidelity, generous self-giving, Christian commitment.” Some individuals were unjustly abandoned in their first marriage or entered into a second marriage for the sake of the children. Others are “subjectively certain in conscience that their previous and irreparably broken marriage had never been valid.”

Given the great variety of concrete situations, Francis makes this important statement: “it is understandable that neither the Synod nor this Exhortation could be expected to provide a new set of general rules, canonical in nature and applicable to all cases.” There are no “easy recipes” to apply to diverse situations. Instead, the pope encourages “a responsible personal and pastoral discernment of particular cases, which recognizes that, since there are various degrees of responsibility, “the consequences or effects of a rule need not necessarily always be the same.” As Aquinas taught, general rules identify a good which must be upheld, but the application in specific situations may vary.

Francis offers helpful pastoral advice on the process of discernment. The

divorced and remarried should do an examination of conscience, asking themselves pertinent questions: how they treated children during the divorce process; did they seek reconciliation when the marriage was in trouble; what has become of their former spouse; how has their new relationship affected the rest of the family and the community; and what example is being set for young people preparing for marriage.

The pope encourages the use of what is traditionally known as “the internal forum,” which involves remarried couples entering into serious conversation with their pastor in a joint effort to discern concrete steps toward fuller participation in the life of the Church. This discernment process should always respect the “Gospel demands of truth and charity” and never give the impression that exceptions to the general rules can be easily attained or that the Church maintains a double standard. It is a dynamic process which should help form “an enlightened conscience” that can recognize “the most generous response that can be given to God” in the “concrete complexity” of a person’s limited situation.

Following the majority of Synod Fathers, Francis wants divorced and remarried Catholics to be more fully integrated into Christian communities while avoiding scandal. “They are baptized; they are brothers and sisters; and the Holy Spirit pours into their hearts gifts and talents for the good of all” (n299). Pastors should treat them not as excommunicated persons, but as living members of the Church “who deserve welcome and encouragement” along the path of life and the Gospel. “It can no longer be simply said that all

those in any irregular situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace.” There may well be “mitigating factors” that limit the culpability of persons in irregular marriages; for example, affective immaturity or the force of acquired habit, as noted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Given these factors, pastors should not simply apply moral laws to the divorced and remarried, “as if they were stones to throw at people’s lives.” Rather they should enter a process of discernment which helps couples find “possible ways of responding to God and growing in “the life of grace and charity, while receiving the Church’s help to this end.” At this point, Pope Francis adds the extremely significant footnote, n351, which states: “In certain cases this can include the help of the sacraments.” Specifying the point, he reminds us that the confessional is not a “torture chamber,” but is rather “an encounter with the Lord’s mercy” and that the Eucharist is “not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.”

Lest he be misunderstood, Francis insists that dealing mercifully with irregular marriages does not undercut the Church’s proclamation of “the full ideal of marriage, God’s plan in all its grandeur.” The pope puts it this way: “To show understanding in the face of exceptional situations never implies dimming the light of the fuller ideal, or proposing less than what Jesus offers to the human being.”

With that clarification, Francis once again reminds pastors to accompany with mercy and patience couples called to take steps towards the ideal of

Christian marriage, treating them with compassion while avoiding harsh judgement. The pope knows some “prefer a more rigorous pastoral care which leaves no room for confusion.” He believes, however, that Jesus wants pastors to enter into the complex reality of people’s lives, bringing “the balm of mercy” and “the power of tenderness.” When pastors leave their comfortable niches and meet people where they really are, their lives become “wonderfully complicated.”

Pope Francis concludes the eighth chapter by encouraging those in “complicated situations” to speak with their pastors or committed lay persons, searching for some light on the path to personal growth and their proper place in the Church.

Reactions to the pope’s approach to communion for divorced and remarried Catholics have varied greatly. Those who wanted clear rules either allowing or forbidding communion have expressed disappointment that he refused to take a stand. A number of commentators pointed out that only a relatively small number of Catholics see it as a personal concern, since most divorced and remarried have either left the Church or go to communion despite current rules. The *New York Times* columnist, Ross Douthat, a self-identified conservative Catholic, suggested that conservatives do not know how to respond to a document that “if read straightforwardly seems to introduce various kinds of ambiguity into the church’s official teaching on marriage, sin and the sacraments,” which provide “theological cover” for those in favor of a path to reconciliation and communion. Douthat identified some

possible conservative responses: declare victory because the exhortation did not change doctrine; read it in light of previous church teaching and argue there is “no rupture” and “everything is fine;” question the authority of the document which is an exhortation and does not carry the same weight as an encyclical; and his own approach, which acknowledges the ambiguities in the text even though this opens the door to more liberal interpretations. *Boston Globe* columnist James Carroll, a former priest, pointed out that Francis all but explicitly opened communion to the divorced and remarried and lauded him for bringing into the light the long standing secretive practice of the “internal forum.” As Carroll recalled from his own days as a priest, couples typically talked to their pastors and prayerfully made their own decision about communion.

It seems to me that Francis has adopted a brilliant pastoral strategy that refuses to reduce morality to keeping rules and places this difficult issue in the framework of moving toward the high Gospel ideal of one man and woman in a lifelong, faithful, mutually enriching and socially beneficial relationship. By refusing to promulgate new rules, the pope encourages a more Gospel-based morality calling for prayerful discernment and fidelity to a properly formed conscience. This is not a weak compromise designed to keep from totally alienating liberals and conservatives. It is a Christ-like response by a wise pastor who understands the dynamic interplay between Gospel ideals and human limitations.

We can imagine various positive responses to the pope’s pastoral

sensitivity. Some priests will find justification for their previous use of the internal forum; others will be more open to helping couples discern their position in the Church. Some divorced and remarried couples who now go to communion will be relieved of lingering guilt feelings and perhaps extend their involvement in the parish; others will be moved to talk to their pastors about participating in the sacraments. We all can learn important lessons from the pastoral wisdom of Pope Francis: maintain the high ideals of the Gospel; avoid harsh judgments of others; prayerfully discern the next step forward on our spiritual journey; and have faith in the merciful God who calls us by name and never tires of forgiving.

#### ***Starfish Update – June 6, 2016***

What an incredible two weeks! On May 20, our Family to Family Ministry team (F2F) was contacted by Catholic Charities of the East Bay (CCEB). “There is a family of 5 from Iraq scheduled to arrive in Oakland on Thursday, June 2. Can you help?” A series of emails between CCEB and F2F ensued. F2F reached out to a member of the Iraqi family (Ali) who had immigrated to the U.S. six years ago. Because of the dangerous situation in his homeland, Ali has been working almost 5 years to get his parents and younger siblings out of Iraq. When contacted, Ali immediately agreed to meet with the F2F team. The meeting took place on Thursday, May 26 in the parish office.

At the meeting, the F2F team was introduced to Ali, his wife Hawraa and their two young daughters, Ban (age 8) and Sama (age 2 ½). CCEB was also

there and provided some important suggestions on how to proceed.

In the meantime, one of our St. Ignatius of Antioch families stepped forward with a wonderful offer. Our family from Iraq was arriving in 7 days and would need a place to stay. This parish family graciously made a vacant home available.

At the weekend liturgies on May 28 and 29, the F2F team reached out to our entire community. A family with nothing but what they carried in their luggage was arriving in 4 days. A home needed to be furnished – from beds and dressers to pots and pans – virtually everything. The response was astonishing! Everything needed, and more, was donated.

Our community responded generously with financial support as well. This support will be critical as we work to transition our family to permanent housing in the next 30 days.

On Monday, Memorial Day, members of our parish met at the house that was to become the temporary home of the family from Iraq. Personal items and furniture belonging to the previous tenants had to be packed and transported to storage. The vacant home was cleaned from top to bottom. Ali and his young family joined us and worked side by side with our parishioners.

One of our parishioners went shopping with Hawraa, showing her the location of a nearby market that featured Halal food. Nonperishable staples were purchased and the pantry stocked. Arrangements were made to return to the

store on Thursday June 2 to stock up on fresh meat, vegetables and fruit.

Preparations for the family's arrival continued on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (May 31 – June 2). Donated furniture was picked up and delivered to the home. Cleaning and minor maintenance continued up to the afternoon of June 2; beds were made, linens folded and stored, pantry and kitchen supplied, and more. Finally, in anticipation of their arrival that evening, the kitchen table was festooned with fresh flowers, red, white and blue balloons and a beautiful display of fresh fruits and vegetables. Sunflowers, fresh garlic and recently harvested onions from the St. Ignatius of Antioch garden were included.

On the evening of June 2, Ali and his family, parishioners and CCEB met in terminal 2 at the Oakland airport. The family was scheduled to arrive at 9:10 pm. However, Ali's reunion with his parents, brother and sisters did not happen that night. We were told that the flight would be delayed at least 3 hours and even then there was no guarantee that the flight wouldn't be cancelled at the last minute. The representatives from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) who met the family in LA decided that a good night's sleep was in order, put the family into a motel near the airport and arranged for a flight on Friday June 3. Ali, though relieved that his family was safely in the U.S., was clearly disappointed that the reunion would not take place that night.

On Friday, June 3, Ali and his family, parishioners and CCEB again reconvened at the Oakland airport. This

time it happened! Our parishioners observed a truly heartwarming reunion of a son and his parents. Ali had not seen his family in six years and for all of those 6 years, their safety was a constant concern. Those concerns all melted away on Friday afternoon. We saw brothers and sisters reconnecting after a long separation; grandparents meeting their youngest grandchild for the first time; grandchildren shyly greeting their grandparents, uncle and aunts; and most important, a family separated far too long finally reunited.

Following the happy reunion, luggage was loaded, people assigned to different cars, and the family was transported to Antioch.

When everyone arrived in Antioch, parishioners who assisted in the transportation attempted to leave but Ali and his family would have none of that. Instead, a wonderful dinner was laid out and our parishioners were privileged to share in this wonderful “first” meal. With Ali serving as translator, Ali’s father Mohammed expressed his gratitude for all the kindness that our community had shown his family. He spoke eloquently about the Islamic concept of the Universal Brotherhood of Human Beings. While Muslims are one brotherhood and Christians are members of another brotherhood, we are all part of the larger Brotherhood of Humanity. He called us all members of the same family. It was clearly a heartfelt sentiment that bridged any communication or cultural barriers that may have existed.

Following the dinner, our parishioners said their goodbyes and left the family to their reunion and preparations for

Ramadan which continues from now through Tuesday, July 5.

On Monday, June 6, parishioners assisted Ali in transporting his family to the Catholic Charities offices in Concord for an orientation meeting and then to Social Security to apply for their social security cards. This is just the beginning of a long and, with the prayers and support of St. Ignatius of Antioch, a successful transition for the family to a new life in the U.S.

One final note. You may notice that no parishioners were named in this update. That’s because SO many folks have stepped forward to help and offer assistance making this truly a Year of Mercy project for our entire community! By their actions, our faith community is responding in a very concrete way to Pope Francis’ call to “Welcome the Stranger” and to the Gospel message “For I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (Matthew 25:35)