

Homily by Bishop Felipe Estévez
Mass at St. Paul Parish, Jacksonville Beach
Sunday, November 5, 2017

My greatest wish for each one of you here today is Peace – inner peace. As the psalmist says, “Truly I have set my soul in silence and peace ...a weaned child on its mother’s breast even so is my soul.” Inner peace is a gift of the Lord to you because you are first loved by God – unconditionally. This is the Good News. You are a sinner, at times you are ashamed of yourself but in spite of it all, you are loved with an infinite love for all eternity.

You are a temple of the Holy Spirit, says St. Paul. Thus, you have a unique mission and a singular purpose. No, you are not a product of the evolution or happen to be a product of chance at random. And you belong; you belong to a family, and to this network of families at Jacksonville Beach – St. Paul Parish. Like the communities that Paul founded in Thessalonica, Corinth, Rome, and Ephesus, you are a community of faithful believers.

What Paul said to the Thessalonians applies to you too: **“You heard the message as God’s message, you accepted it for what it really is, God’s message and not some human thinking: And it is still a living power among you who believe it.”**

I recognize a real renewal happening in your parish, school, and St. Peter’s. Mission-people are growing in the faith by new access to the sacraments thanks to the RCIA – the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

When I was a teen in the 60’s, one would read a book, see a priest and receive the sacraments. Now, it is a journey with others; it is a year-long process of walking together with several catechists and sponsors while taking different steps, all related to the parish community culminating in the mother of all Vigils, Easter Night!

And you were indeed afflicted by Hurricane Irma, and your gym was destroyed but in less than 24 hours, your pastor – the great administrator he is – had a solution with a process in place! Your parish has a great vitality, a great corporate spirit of building the faith: It is a living message working within!

The temple is you, each of you!

The temple is the community, body of Christ!

The temple is the building, like a home is to a family – every family has a decent, beautiful home. Your parish community has the dream of a new house of prayer for all people, a beautiful edifice worthy of this magnificent neighborhood of Jacksonville Beach!

Your most generous response is simply amazing, and it honors the Master, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the King of Glory whom you honor! For the Eternal Father’s glory indeed. Proverbs 29:18, Where there is no prophetic vision the people perish ...you love the Church, you love this network of families which is the parish, and your selfless love builds a future, a beautiful future for your families, all together as one people.