



## FROM THE DESK OF FR. MIKE

I am blessed to receive notes of support; words of encouragement and wisdom-filled reflections from many people from many walks of life. Those that speak to my heart, and deepen my love for God are often found making their way into my bulletin article. Today is another example of such a message that I am happy to share with you.

The following reflection is titled, “Heart Made by God”, written by Fr. Austin Fleming

*“If what they say about snowflakes is true, Lord: that no two are exactly alike,  
how much more true must that be of human hearts...”*

*Each heart has its own history, its own unique set of circumstances,  
shaped and molded by the histories of so many other human hearts,  
each heart's story written and told in its own unique voice,  
each story marked by the mystery of your individual and singular touch  
upon every human heart you have created, loved, touched, mended, healed, redeemed and saved...*

*You love each heart you've made, Lord - you love my heart -  
as you've loved no other heart in history - neither more nor less than any other -  
but with a singular love for the unique human person I am and will, with your grace, become...*

*With what great care then, Lord, ought I approach any man or woman  
for each is loved by you as you have loved no other creature on earth  
since before time began...*

*With what great openness then should I honor all the differences,  
all the way others are not like me for you love us in our differences  
as much - or even more - than in all the ways we are alike...*

*With what great patience, Lord, must I wait on how others grow,  
how they change and respond to me, to others, to life, to the world around us:  
as I'd have others be patient with me so must I be patient with them and with their stories...*

*Help me learn, Lord, that one size does not fit all, that as much as you love all of us equally,  
so, do you love each of us individually, in ways uniquely intended, suited,  
custom tailored for the one person you've made each of us to be... Amen”*

Couples preparing for the sacrament of Marriage in the Catholic Church participate in marriage preparation, Pre-Cana classes. Couples preparing for the sacrament of Marriage must complete a series of required documents, etc. Prior to my writing this article, I met with a groom’s parents who were completing the “Witness Affidavit” form for their son’s upcoming wedding. After completing the document, they shared with me some of the joys the family was experiencing as well as some of the sorrows. Earlier this year a member of their family, 51 years old, died from COVID-19. The family is grieving the loss, the death of their family member.

I am grateful for the prayers parishioners have offered for me for healing from my recent surgery. I am writing this article the afternoon prior to my Tuesday morning surgery. Last Sunday, I had to get a COVID test, and if the test came back “Negative” I would be welcomed at the surgery center – if it came back “Positive” the surgery would have needed to be re-scheduled.

As we go into big box stores signs indicate that masks are to be worn. As we go into local funeral homes, to offer prayers and support to the grieving, we are told that masks are to be worn. When we enter doctor’s office buildings, we are reminded that masks are to be worn properly. As you enter the doors of the Church of St. Mary you may have seen the note that reads, “For the love of your neighbor you are asked to wear a mask when at Mass.” If asked, are masks required at Church, the answer is no, they are not. The State and the Archdiocese continues to look at the big picture, what is of benefit for the whole of society, for the greater good with the latest roll-out of protocols and guidelines regarding wearing masks, social distancing, etc. There will be more updates and revised protocols in the coming weeks as we live with COVID.

As brothers and sisters in the Lord, we are to share our faith and to express our faith in action, and when necessary, we can use words. My prayer the last two years has been for healing and wellbeing for all from this incredibly devastating COVID-19. It is my belief that we will continue to learn how to live safely as we go forward. May you and your loved ones be healthy and free from the effects of COVID. May we all continue to pray for those who have died from the disease and pray that efforts will continue to halt and limit its spread.

I hope you will see me soon, hobbling around the parish with my walker or cane as I make it through physical therapy, healing from my recent knee replacement.

God bless our hearts with love of Jesus and our neighbor,

*Fr. Mike Vacca*