

Twenty Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time,
10-1-2017, Cycle A
Church of St. Joan of Arc, Marlton NJ
Sr. Pat Pycik's Golden Jubilee

Saying Yes!

Early one morning, a mother goes in to wake up her daughter. "Wake up, honey, It's time to go to school!"

"But why, Mom? I don't want to go."

"Give me two reasons why you don't want to go."

"Well, the kids hate me for one, and the teachers aren't too crazy about me either!"

"Oh, that's no reason not to go to school. Come on now and get ready."

So, the daughter says, "Give *me* two reasons why I *should* go to school."

"Well, for one, you're 50 years old. And for another, you're the Principal!"

Old joke. Bad joke. And not much truth even in it: here at St. Joan's the children do not

hate Sr. Pat. The teachers do not hate Sr. Pat; and Sr. Pat isn't 50 years old!

But she is celebrating 50 years in religious life ... 50 years of getting up every morning and going out ... into the vineyard, as Jesus would say ... going out and serving God, loving God's people as a Sister of St. Joseph!

That's amazing and wonderful! Congratulations, Sr. Pat!

We all have mornings when we'd rather sleep in ... mornings when we don't want to go to school or to work; days when we'd rather do something other than what must be done; days when nothing goes as planned; days when we start in one direction and end up somewhere entirely different.

But every day begins with an invitation ... the invitation is to live as a child of God, to follow Jesus, an invitation to be a certain kind of person, an invitation to embrace the Spirit of God!

We can say "no." Or: we can say "yes."

Jesus gives us this terrific parable today of two sons invited into the vineyard. As we heard last Sunday, God wants us all in the vineyard, the vineyard that is His heart, his love.

So we have this parable from Jesus, but here at St. Joan of Arc we are blessed because we have a parable of our own: Sr. Pat herself!

She said "yes." On September 12, 1967 (the year I made my first communion!), Patricia Pycik left her house in Camden to step into a vineyard, a future, that suddenly in many ways became not her own. That's a scary thing. To say, "here I am, Lord ... ready or not, I'm here, take me." Very scary.

It's no wonder in Jesus' story one of the brothers changes his mind!

Sr. Pat said "yes," much like the first disciples of Jesus, not knowing everything, but willing to open her life like a sail on a ship and letting the

wonderful whim of the Holy Spirit take her to new places.

She's worked in different vineyards: Philadelphia; Westville Grove, NJ; one glorious year by the beach in Belmar, NJ; 29 years here in Merry Marlton, as she likes to call it.

The vineyard has been the hearts and minds and eyes and ears and imaginations of children ... where Pat has sown seeds of joy and celebration, seeds of faith and hope and courage, seeds of peace and wonder and love.

The vineyard has been in Catholic Schools. Sr. Pat believes in Catholic education, in education that is *catholic* ... that teaches and cares for the whole child, the brain, the body, and the soul. She is the only principal I've ever met who is not fond of homework; who wants kids to learn to read and write but also to gaze at stars and play with butterflies.

Sr. Pat also responds fast and fully when the vineyard is a broken heart. She is often the first person in the ER or your

home when she hears of an illness, accident, or bad news. She sits with you in the waiting room. She hugs you when there are no words to say.

Almost every night of the week, the vineyard is a local nursing home where Pat visits and feeds her sister, Peg.

This day and this Gospel gives us a good opportunity to publicly acknowledge and thank Sr. Pat and *all* the Sisters of St. Joseph who have served our community since 1961: especially those here with us (Sr. Eleanor, Sr. Alma, Sr. Stephanie, Sr. Marcy, Sr. Peg, Sr. Kathy, Sr. Alicia). They show us all how to say "yes" to the Lord's invitation to serve and give.

They have inspired us to do the same ...

... to *respond* ... fully, freely and fearlessly ...

... to the new invitation every day brings to live and love fully in the presence of God.

We might not know what the new day will bring. But we do

know what we can bring to each new day ... we can bring, first of all, ourselves, the person God made us to be ... we can bring hope ... kindness ... mercy and compassion ... we can bring the mind and heart and attitude of Christ ...

... we can bring Jesus ...

It is a new day!

The vineyard awaits!

Who will say, "Yes, Lord, send me!"?