



## From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Friends in Christ,

"I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." – Psalm 121: 1-2

On a beautiful Saturday morning I rode north with 13 young adults from Sacred Heart Parish to climb a mountain. It was cloudy and I was concerned about climbing with these young adults in a thunderstorm, but though low clouds hung over the mountains at times, only distant thunder threatened our morning hike. The mountain we lifted our eyes to was on the highway between Silverton and Ouray and the prize at the end of the hike was Ice Lake. I had heard it was a hard climb, but I think the hardest part for me, at least, was the altitude. I could feel the draw on my strength from the beginning. About halfway up the mountain, the three young ladies walking with me stopped for a breather and I told them I thought I had gone far enough. I was feeling nauseous, light-headed and my head was pounding. I assured them I would be fine and asked them to tell the rest of the group that I would not be able to make it up to the lake.

They left, looking back with concern, but understanding. I eventually caught my breath and I thought, "Well, at least I'll make it to the meadow about half a mile up the trail. We could have Mass there." So I began to walk there. And when I got to the long level trail through the meadow I was feeling much better and stronger, so I continued my walk which took me to a sheer grey wall which I had heard was one of the tougher parts of the climb. I looked at the formidable fortress of grey and wondered if I was going to be able to make the climb. Somehow, with God's help, I did that and at the top of that wall of grey, I stood up wobbly, my legs feeling like rubber.

A young couple was walking towards me and I asked how far it was to the lake. "About 40 minutes," they said cheerily. I wasn't so cheerful. Forty more minutes? Really??? I walked and stopped, walked and stopped. I was having that same breathing problem, but I was in range and eventually I met some of our young adults heading back down the mountain and they told me the lake was "right around the corner." For young adults "right around the corner" is more like half a mile, but, hey, they spurred



me on towards our ultimate goal. By this time, the wind was whipping up, it began to sleet and I was suddenly very cold.

One of the young men said, "Father, you're going to love Ice Lake. It's worth all this!" I followed him around the corner and unveiled before me was the most beautiful, sparkling blue lake. The clouds opened up for a moment and the sun shone down on the blue, sparkling water. It was magnificent. I stumbled on to where my young adults were gathered and they were stunned to see me, I think. But I sat down and drank some water offered by one of the young men. Then I gathered us all together to pray daytime prayer. It was so moving as these wonderful men and women read the psalms and as I looked out with them towards Ice Lake.

There were many other young men and women who were camping there and even swimming in the frigid waters. You've got to give credit to the spirit of these young people. They are fully alive!

After daytime prayer, I said I would find a spot to hear confessions and many of my group met me, one by one, behind a moss-covered monolith of rock where they confessed their sins and were absolved by the mercy of God. What better place than God's beautiful creation to feel the Creator of all this beauty in all His Mercy and Love. After all the confessions, the young adults put together a make-shift altar on top of a beautiful slab of rock and with rain and with sleet and wind we began the Holy Mass. I was somewhat concerned because the elements were not necessarily cooperating and I was afraid the small chalice might fall over or the consecrated hosts might blow away, but suddenly at the consecration, the warm sun shone forth and there was a mystical glow all around. Suddenly it seemed so peaceful and I lifted up the host and it became the Body of Christ on that holy mountain and I lifted the cup and that became the very Blood of Christ. As some of the young people said, it was an amazing thought that we very likely were the first to have the Roman Catholic Mass at that beautiful place and my thought was that these young people with their energy and great faith had blessed this amazing place in a very special way.



One young woman said, "Father, when communion was being given out, several of the other hikers and swimmers watched and one young woman asked me what we were eating. I told her, 'This is a Roman Catholic Mass and we are receiving the Body and Blood of Christ.' She said, 'Wow, that's so cool!'"

It was so cool. What an honor to have made this pilgrimage up that holy mountain with these amazing young adults. In being with them that whole day, I saw such faith, such kindness, such humor, such deep humanity. I said to more than one of them that this day was truly a highlight of my almost 30 years as a Roman Catholic priest. With all the scandals we face in our Church due to lack of leadership of bishops and due to bad priests and bishops doing terrible things to the innocent, this hike was, as the psalmist said, a help from the Lord, "the Maker of Heaven and Earth."

Thank you, men and women. You made me so hopeful in the midst of all the bad news. Journeying with you was a great gift. Thank you. Thank you.



Sincerely in Christ,  
*Rev. Tim Farrell,*  
Pastor