

“THE LOVE THAT HOLDS US TOGETHER”

Exodus 22:20–26 • Psalm 18 • 1 Thessalonians 1:5–10 • Matthew 22:34–40



The Gospel today brings us to the heart of our faith: “You shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus does not offer a theory or a slogan — He gives us the foundation on which every parish, every ministry, every act of service must rest.

As I reflect on these past weeks, I see that love alive in Holy Cross. I have seen it in your welcome, your reverence, your unity, and your joy. I have seen it in the installation Mass, in the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, and in the countless ways you have stepped forward to serve. The lectors, altar servers, choir, ushers, ministers, and parishioners — each of you offered something beautiful to God.

And then there were the celebrations! What a wonderful expression of generosity, abundance, and diversity. The tables were filled with food reflecting the many cultures and traditions that enrich our parish. But what impressed me most was not simply the abundance of food, but the abundance of goodwill. Holy Cross clearly knows how to celebrate! And such celebrations remind us that the table belongs to everyone. Hospitality is not only about what we offer, but about making sure that all feel equally welcomed, included, and valued. The food nourished our bodies; the fellowship nourished our communion.

I also want to speak a word of gratitude that is personal. Many of you expressed congratulations in tangible ways — through cards, gestures, and even gifts. I want you to know that I received them with humility and sincere appreciation. It is not something I am accustomed to, nor something I ever expect. What sustains me as your pastor is not personal gifts, but the parish itself — your presence, your prayer, your generosity, and the weekly offering that keeps our community alive. Christ teaches His priests to be content with what is placed on the table, and what is placed on the table here at Holy Cross is enough. It is your faith, your commitment, your support of the parish — and from that table, I am able to preach, to serve, and to walk with you. The bishop himself noticed your spirit. He spoke with admiration about your welcome, your reverence, your unity, and your joy. He saw what I have already come to know: Holy Cross is a parish with a generous heart.

As we move forward, let us root ourselves again in the commandment that holds us together: love of God and love of neighbor. Thank you for your kindness, your trust, and your willingness to walk into this new chapter with hope. May the generosity we celebrate around our tables become the hospitality we practise every day — where everyone has a place, and no one is left standing outside.

Fr. Efren