



*They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.*

—Jeremiah 17:8

October 18, 2023

Dear St. Peter's Grace Families,

Some of the most important words to say in Church are “thank you.” Say it often, and mean it, to God and neighbor alike; today I say it to you. *Thank you* for the many gifts that you share with our community.

You have heard the familiar expression “can’t see the forest for the trees” before. We most often use it to describe that occasion in which we lose sight of the big picture while focusing on the details. From my position, I often experience the blessing of being able to see the big picture of our parish – the ministry we bring to our neighbors, the impact we have on our community, the ways that week after week we come together to celebrate our faith and praise God. This is the forest.

And I also get to wander amongst the trees. From the small shoot reaching out from its seed and finding the sunlight, to the mightiest tree, standing tall, showing strength, offering sheltering love to those who need it. You are those trees, each drawing strength from being fed by Word, Sacrament, and the life we share, and in turn showering the world with the love and grace you have come to know here. I consider it a great gift that in my ministry among you, I can see both the forest and the trees!

When I walk through a forest, I am aware of the tangle of roots, how one tree is connected to another. Scientists tell us that trees use these networks, secretly talking to each other through their roots, passing information along. Adult trees share their sugars with young saplings, and a more senior tree can send its remaining resources back out to help the community that will long endure. These networks, these roots of abundance, keep trees in place just as much as they free them to grow and share.

The theme of our annual pledge campaign this year is ***Rooted in Abundance***, and we are reminded that St. Peter's Grace is a mighty forest comprised of ancient trunks and sprightly saplings, each of us contributing our gifts to a community and world that needs us. As you hear the messages and stories of abundance this year, take note of how generosity spreads and widens our root structures of faith and action.

You will hear more in the coming weeks from your Senior Wardens, your 2024 Stewardship Campaign Co-Chairs, and select parishioners on Sunday mornings. You will also be invited to prayerfully consider how you will make a financial commitment to St. Peter's Grace in 2024. So I say in advance, “thank you” for joining me in making a financial commitment to St. Peter's Grace to support our mission and ministry in 2024.

In gratitude,

*Fr. Derek*