



Hearts Speak to Hearts

St. Francis de Sales tells us, *“Our words must be enkindled, not by exaggerated shouts and actions, but by an inner love; they must come from the heart rather than from the mouth. Say what you will, the heart speaks to the heart; the tongue speaks but to the ear.”*

Our actions speak louder than words. In fact, it is our actions that speak most directly to our hearts. And if Immaculate Conception Church were to say anything with its actions, it would say We live Jesus Christ by proclaiming the Gospel, by celebrating the Eucharist, by nourishing our Faith and by loving and serving all God's people. That we commit ourselves to do all things in the spirit of St. Francis de Sales with compassion, humility, and gentleness.

I cannot begin to express the gratefulness that myself have for the kindness, gentleness, flexibility, and patience that we have experienced from you, our parish family. When we began this journey to celebrating the Liturgy in person, we knew that there would be some difficulties and learning experiences along the way, but during these weeks we have seen the truly loving nature that is embodied here at ICC.

During the lock-down itself we spoke our love of God and our love of our neighbor by:

- Making regular phone calls to check in on our sick and homebound brothers and sisters
- 32 volunteers came forward to deliver groceries and pick-up prescriptions for high-risk parishioners
- We make available masks and face-shields to anyone who needs access to them
- We give food collected each week to the Help Center, along with \$4,000 annually to supplement their needs. We held an additional food drive recently that filled their shelves and will help to meet the needs of those on Carolina Beach
- We have and are still creating a joyful and colorful space to welcome back our parishioners with the Be-Attitudes Project. It exemplifies the attitude we have embraced during this Pandemic. One of hope, of love, of patience, and of generosity.
- We took our time to develop comprehensive and compassionate protocols and guidelines to enable us to return to celebrating the Liturgy in person with minimized risk to everyone we encounter

It is easy to understand why ICC has always been experienced as a spiritual family. Visitors to our parish find our assembly warm and inviting. Beyond any doubt, both in good times and in bad, the parishioners of ICC have always cared for one another with the love of Christ and have generously responded to the needs that have arisen in the parish. We exemplify our southern ‘pineapple’ hospitality in the way that we welcome everyone to our community.

We have witnessed time and time again how ICC is a family. Richard White, as some of you

may recall, received a double organ transplant during the shut-down. He had been on the organ donor list for years but did not let his faith be troubled. He was initiated fully into the Church last year, and our parish was there to celebrate. He and his family have been lifted up in prayer, as have so many of us who have struggled or faced trials. After his surgery, he called to give us the news personally. He said, “Fr. John, thank you. Prayer really works.” I am very happy to say that Richard is well enough that he will be able to attend a weekday liturgy soon to see his youngest Confirmed in the Catholic faith.

Although ICC has changed with many new parishioners and with us Oblates over the years, many of which are true characters-I am one of them, the mission of our parish remains the same. As a community of God’s people, we respond to the call of our heavenly father to follow and imitate Jesus, and to do the ordinary extraordinarily well. With God’s love poured into our hearts by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we are servants of the Lord. Grounded in this mission to Live Jesus, we look forward to the future with great confidence. Our community may be of medium size, but our parishioners are doing great works!

Mindful of our colorful and supportive past and aware of our present work, your generosity is needed now more than ever to help ICC as we continue to move into the future and search for additional ways to help our parishioners experience the love of Christ, the joy of good friendships, and the satisfaction that comes with serving the Lord. With this in mind, I invite you to join our parish family in responding to our program, Hearts Speak to Hearts. This week you will be receiving a special brochure in the mail along with a Commitment Card to renew your financial commitment in support of the important ministries here at ICC. Next weekend, September 26 & 27, will be our Commitment Sunday. Following my homily, you will hear from a parishioner who has experienced first-hand the love and commitment at ICC, and who sees our potential in continuing to build the Kingdom of God in our midst. Immediately after, you will be asked to fill out and return your financial commitment card. Your contribution will do so much good for our parish.

Over these past years I have witnessed every day the good in our parish. So many of you generously share your time, talents, and treasure during liturgy and in our ministries. You work tirelessly to make our mission a success. I see dedicated people of all ages not afraid of hard work, especially our older parishioners who could have “called it quits” years ago. I have felt the warmth in your handshakes and the kindness in your words. I am overwhelmed by your compassion and concern for the well-being and safety of everyone, and how through selflessness and love you tell all you encounter that ICC is a people, not a place, learning to live Jesus.

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From one heart to another.... Thank you.

May God Be Praised!

