



# *Moments of Grace*

from Bishop Geoff Peddle

The Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland & Labrador

## **Brokenness into Blessing**

**Moments of Grace**

**March 28, 2015**

Kathy and I attended “Italian Night” at the Parish of the Good Shepherd in Mount Pearl last evening. It was a delightful time with about 80 or so old friends from the parish and beyond. As always, the evening included an Italian meal (soup, salad, lasagna) with music and fellowship. It was good for us to be part of a community much-loved by us as we served there for four and a half years during a time of change in their life. We are always happy to see continued growth in the parish and affirm the solid ministry of Archdeacon Charlene Taylor and all of the good people around her. Indeed, the “Good Shepherd” remains our home parish although I only get there rarely these days.

Something that always impresses Kathy and me when we are with the members of the Good Shepherd Parish is the joy with which they carry out their work as God’s People. Even the smallest of tasks are performed with pleasure and with grace. I used to tell them during my time as their rector that our ministry should be one of joy in all that we do. There is little blessing to be found in giving of ourselves grudgingly or out of some misplaced sense of obligation so that we get something in return. As Christians we are called to share freely what God has already given us and to do that with joy. That is one of the reasons that the Parish of the Good Shepherd continues to be the community it is but there is another and it took me three years as their rector to figure it out: They are a group of people who actually like each other. They like being together. They like serving together.

The energy that comes from joyful service among people you like being with is infectious. And from that core community of joyful believers new ministries have blossomed, notably with children, but also in the world around them in innovative and fresh ways. The parish continues to give away 10% of their fundraising to other community groups outside the church so that the blessing they are may be a blessing to others. I would identify their core ministry today as not even about themselves but about others and is one of Christian Hospitality with their Wednesday Cafe (always free of charge) and other events. They practice what I call “intentional hospitality” with volunteers from the parish and elsewhere who are trained and equipped and upheld in prayer for their work. I have said many times that the face of our church to the world today should be one of hospitality and at the Good Shepherd they have taken that to a whole new level. The traveller who comes to their door is welcomed and fed and blessed. They really are an example of what can happen when people of goodwill and faith come together in unity and in service to God and to their neighbors. But it wasn’t always that way...

I write with great love for the Parish of the Good Shepherd when I say that it is a parish that has known profound brokenness in its past. That community has experienced unique challenges along the way that have forced it to reflect upon their identity and life in deep and transformative ways. To their everlasting credit as People of God they have embraced the pain that comes with change and grown more deeply in their faith.



At risk of paraphrasing Leonard Cohen once too often in my ministry, there are cracks in everything. There are no perfect institutions anywhere in the world and our church is no different. But sometimes the cracks really do allow the light to get in. And when that light – God’s light – shines deeply in the midst of a community of faith, there is transformation.

That’s what the Parish of the Good Shepherd has taught me. Brokenness can sometimes be a good thing in our journey as the People of God. Sometimes our greatest blessings really can come through tears.

That is true in our community life.  
It is also true in our individual lives as Christians.

I end with this link to a video by Laura Story called **Blessings:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CSVqHcdhXQ&list=RD1CSVqHcdhXQ#t=3>

With my every blessing,  
**+Geoff**