



As with many career paths, part of our pastoral development of sorts is a time of internship, when oftentimes a student is connected with a congregation and the lead pastor there serves as the supervisor. All well and good. Except, for some reason beyond comprehension, my esteemed overseer decided to take a two-month sabbatical towards the end of my time with that community of faith. To say upon his departure that my anxiety was heightened a bit would be a most massive understatement. And I

specifically remember asking him if he wanted to be contacted if... whatever came up, and he said, with a light chuckle, "If only the building caught on fire." Thankfully, we somehow managed to avoid that. However, the first week of course, a funeral had to happen.

That in of itself wasn't that big of a deal. They did train us for such things on the seminary-front beforehand and all, but the bigger deal happened the day before, when the family called and said they wanted to move the luncheon from wherever off-site to the fellowship hall, instead. The smart thing would have been for me to call whatever respective ministry team to let them know of the far-too-late change in plans, but I knew they had families and jobs and lives that I didn't want interrupt for a last-minute plea to come by the church building and ruin their evening. So, since family wasn't quite in the picture for me just yet with my bachelor life in the apartment just down the road, I went ahead and started rolling out the circular tables and pulling out the folding chairs with whatever placemats and random dinnerware, which I'm sure wasn't up to the church standards, but nevertheless, it gone done that night, and we could go on with the proceedings the next day all relatively fine.

Then, as those respective ministry team people arrived to pay their respects to the family, they started to wonder out loud about the setup in the fellowship hall. Eventually, word got out about the no-life intern, who rather haphazardly put it together; and although they seemed to appreciate the effort, there was this rather whole-hearted refrain from them, "Thanks, but next time, just call first. That's what we're here for, after all." It was the strangest thing: these people with families and jobs and lives outside the church, whose finances and time and gifts and talents were being pulled from every direction imaginable, and yet, they still wanted to be a part of this thing called church.

All these people who we sometimes wonder if they have any time to sleep at all with their countless commitments to ensure children are raised somewhat properly and they work to the expectations of their own supervisors and they participate in other community activities for social and mental well-being and on and on it goes, and yet, they still want to be a part of this movement that seems to never stop on wanting to proclaim not only verbally but in physical action the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And not only that, but the people who have even retired from their daily Monday to Friday grind, and are somehow even more busy with grandparenting and house-maintaining and medical appointments galore, and they all want to be a part of something that keeps on pulling at their gifts and talents, because this God insists they all have something to offer to not only nourish their own congregation but well beyond the walls of a building.

These are the people for whom we will lift up and bless today as leaders of Divinity: people who could have more than understandably passed on the offer to serve, because well, life can be rather chaotic, to say the least. But, evidently, they see something at work here, including in all of you. These are the ones for whom we can see that easily overlooked phrase in the Gospel brought to life: that there will be those who will believe even more in Jesus Christ through their word, and not just their word, but their action. Their words of compassion and hope and love and joy and a belief

that Christ is still Risen indeed, including right here, right now; that they cannot help themselves but want to be part of a movement that's still going on in communities of faith all over the world, even if we do not have quite as many to share the responsibilities as we have in generations past.

And yet, somehow, someday, the Risen Christ still insists on making the divine love known through them, through all of us, and beyond. Today, we give thanks for the people who, evidently, don't mind being called when something comes up (granted, we'll try to avoid the whole day-before change of plans thing), but still, don't mind that their gifts and talents are even further shared, because this relentless love of Jesus Christ must be made known as much as we possibly can with all of our Divinity family, and as far as our words and actions can reach. Because this Gospel is far too powerful to keep to ourselves. So for them, for all of you of Divinity, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!