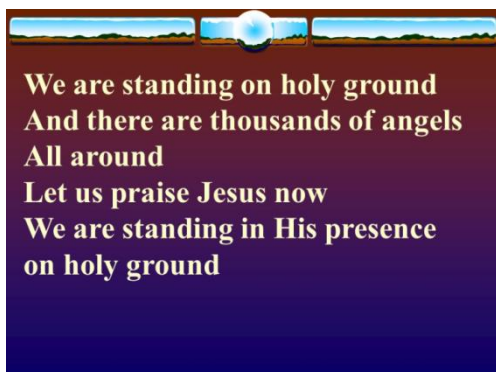




As many of you have heard, a few years ago, I went to the Holy Land, and Jordan and Egypt. One of our stops was Mount Sinai, the site where Moses encountered God in a burning bush and was told: "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place

where you are standing is holy ground." It was here on Mount Sinai that Moses received the Ten Commandments. I was excited to be at such a holy place; the tradition there is to climb the 5000 foot mountain, beginning at about 3:00 a.m. so you can see the sunrise from the top of the mountain. I was determined to do this, but a friend I made on the pilgrimage told me not to go. He was afraid that it might be too difficult for me. He started telling me about people who have heart attacks climbing this mountain. That was quite encouraging! So, I decided to ride a camel to the top of the mountain. Again, Alex said riding a camel was even harder than walking. Finally, I reluctantly decided not to go. So, when the pilgrims from our group came back from the trip they were sore and worn out. A woman who had ridden a camel had huge sores and bruises. I remember telling this story one day here at Mass and saying with great seriousness that Alex may have saved my life. One of the parishioners at the door said to me, *I think Alex may have saved the camel's life also.*



I love the image of Holy Ground. It is certain sacred space where we encounter the Living God in a very profound way. Holy Ground is wherever the human and the divine touch. The Irish refer to it as a thin place where the lines between Heaven and earth are very thin. It is a place of grace. I was an assistant for nine

years to the first Redemptorist pastor who came to St. Martin's: Father George Keaveney. We became close friends. I remember when he went to the hospital and found he had terminal cancer with a short time to live, he asked for three things: his rosary, a few donuts, and a novel. He chose at that moment of such dark news to continue to live and enjoy the gifts of God. Shortly before he died, he quoted Therese of Lisieux to his sister, Margie, *it's all grace*. When my sister Gerry died at the young age of 45, I was inconsolable. I could not give a homily so my dear friend Father McGowan spoke. Gerry loved Irish step-dancing and Father John ended his moving sermon a quote from the poet W H Auden; *when grace comes you have to dance*.



For almost a hundred years, people have of faith have come to this sacred place, St. Martin of Tours Church, and have danced in the living waters of grace. A century ago, lay people from the town of Bethpage walked the railroad tracks to Hicksville so they could receive the Body and Blood of Christ at Mass. In 1917 several laymen approached the Bishop and asked for a priest

and a parish. By 1923, like the persistent widow in the Gospel, they had worn him down and he allowed a parish to be formed, with a church to be built, much of which still remains to this day, built by the hand working hands of the parishioners who dragged the wood from their farms so to share in the building of this church. Over the past century, much of the grace-filled ministry of this parish has been served by the Diocesan Clergy of Brooklyn and Rockville Centre. Soon, these skillful men of God will again take up that call.

**Mass of Thanksgiving For our Parish and the Redemptorists for  
Thirty-Three of God's Grace Shared.  
July 7, 2019 1:00 p.m. Mass**



Today, we the Redemptorist stand in humble reverence at the amazing grace of God that we have shared with you over the past thirty-three years. We will be forever grateful to the Bishops, clergy and people of Rockville Centre who have welcome us into your homes and hearts. When an

Irishman want to greet another Irish person, He says, *Cead Mile Failte A hundred thousand welcomes*. Today, we the members of the Congregation of the Most Redeemer Say to Almighty God and to the Diocese of Rockville Centre and to the Parishioners of St. Martin's, one *A Hundred Thousand Thanks* for allowing us to share on this holy ground with all of you.



The words on our Redemptorist Seal are: *With Him There is Plentiful Redemption*. (Latin: *Copiosa Eum Redemptio*) Many of you shared in a book bearing that same name, or shared it at other times at wakes, a hospital rooms, a wedding receptions, a block parties, a Golden Harvest nights, the births of a children, times

national disasters, parish tragedies and times of the horror of terrorism. Sometimes, there were tears and grief and at other moments laughter and joy. Together, we experienced the powerful and awesome grace of God's plentiful redemption and stood on holy ground.



In today's Gospel, we heard the account of the joyful experiences of the apostles returning home to with Jesus and telling him of their excitement about their first missionary experience.

- I will share just a few of your words from the book Plentiful Redemption on of how we stood on holy ground and experienced the grace of God in our midst
- I remember the day we all needed someone and Father was there to help. It was the days following September 11<sup>th</sup>
- My son's friend, who was only 19, had been killed by a drunk driver. Father comforted me and prayed for this young man and his family.
- I will always remember what Father did for my family on Christmas Day 2010. In a raging snowstorm, during what was probably the hour he was enjoying his Christmas dinner, he answered our emergency call within



minutes and came to North Shore Plainview hospital to give Last Rites to my mother.

- I can never forget the love and compassion that the Redemptorists priests showed to the homebound parishioners when they needed a visit for confession and special blessings.
- I remember the day when I needed someone and Father scored a HAT TRICK against a FDNY team!
- Just the thought of St. Martin's parish still puts a smile on my face! You took a green, inexperienced seminarian newbie and nurtured and prayed him through the stages of religious brother, transitional deacon and finally into a priest!
- During Lent that year, I was called to receive the sacrament. Truly, the confessor had the spirit of St. Alphonsus, patron of confessors (I hadn't yet know St. Alphonsus). It was raining out when I entered the Church, but the Sun was shining bright when I left that day... I am grateful.
- I never missed my family or friends back home because God literally arranged for me at St. Martin of Tours for a bigger family, more friends and more of everything than I needed to carry His mission.
- How many pastors do you know who sit a water tank letting people dunk him? Our parish had its own dunking priest.



I began with the story of the poor donkey whose life was saved by Alex. I'll end with the story of the poor priest who was saved by his people. After my dunking, many

parishioners said never do that again Father, you could get hurt. We love our priests. As someone recently wrote to me, there is so much love in this parish.



Thank you Lord for the thirty three years that Redemptorist shared holy ground with the parishioners of St. Martin's, For thirty three years we had the joy of dancing in the grace of God with all of you on what will always be for us Holy Ground.