

## My Story, His Glory: Reflections on Gratitude, Faith, and Mission

As I return from a refreshing retreat, my priesthood is energized and I am eager to share a story that blessed me and my fellow priests. This story highlights the importance of gratitude and the power of sharing our experiences.

A woman once shared why she attends church: According to her it is to give thanks. Her story began with a complicated pregnancy, where both she and her baby were at risk. Despite the challenges, On the surgery day she had an encounter with a mysterious doctor who wore casual attire, unlike the usual medical team. He assured her that she and her baby would be healthy and instructed her to "come back and give thanks." The surgery was successful, and when she sought to thank the doctors, she discovered that there were only three, and none matched the description of the fourth.

She realized that the fourth doctor was Jesus, who not only healed her but also mandated her to give thanks.

This story resonates with me, especially after my recent retreat. Before I left for the retreat, I asked some Grade 7 students from St. Michael Catholic School to help clean up the dry leaves in front of our church. They enthusiastically collaborated with their teacher and me. As the students cleaned up leaves, they transformed the task into a delightful experience. They took turns diving into the leaf pile, burying each other, and then springing out when their names were called.

This carefree scene struck me as theologically profound. It echoed Jesus' miraculous raising of Lazarus from the dead after four days in the tomb (John 11:1-44). Additionally, it resonated with the Catholic Church's November tradition of praying for the deceased, particularly on All Souls' Day.

In that moment, a simple task became a poignant reminder of God's promise of eternal life and the importance of honoring those who have gone before us. Through our prayers and penance, God will call by name our loved ones from the dead and gloriously usher them into the kingdom of heaven.

As we reflect on our stories and gratitude, may we be inspired to deepen our faith and share God's love with others. May our experiences empower us to become missionaries of hope, spreading the Good News and serving those in need. May our gratitude fuel our passion for evangelization, guiding others toward the promise of eternal life.