

## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

FEBRUARY 2026

As I await the beginning of the Lenten season, I've turned for my spiritual reflection to something that has been a meaningful part of my spiritual growth over the years - reflection on the lives of individuals who were very devoted in their faith and held a deep love of our Lord within their hearts. The person I was led to reflect upon is Philip Neri (1515-1595), an ordained priest who left a legacy of service to our Lord and who did it with such lightheartedness, he is remembered as the joyful saint.

The resource I am using starts with his formative years which were in Florence, Italy. It discusses the influence of the Church community in his life and specific individuals that inspired him. As I read of Philip Neri's experiences in his hometown, I had such a warm feeling come over me because what he experienced was so much like my formative years. The impact of the Church community which is FPC started with the ministers (Paul Sobel and Clyde Brown) who inspired FPC and was followed by the individuals who taught the Sunday School classes, ran the youth programs, and influenced my life in other ways. Add to that the education I received at IMHS and the friendships of my classmates, how critical that all was in the molding and shaping of who I am today much as was the case with Philip Neri. Gratitude filled my soul.

This past Sunday, Lauren March was with us in Church as she was here to see her parents, particularly her mom, Lorna, as she battles the cancer that has beset her. What a beautiful person Lauren is through the wonderful parenting she received from Mike and Lorna but also through the love of FPC which she experienced growing up here. God has called Lauren into ministry, and she presently serves a church outside of Pittsburgh. I can't help thinking how FPC did it again as it did it with me, through its love and support greatly impacting a young life that has gone forth to serve God - in Lauren's case, in ministry. Of course, we are also blessed by another of the March family, Josh, who was raised in this Church and who now ministers to us every Sunday morning through his call to music as our Praise Band Director.

That is who FPC is. With a vibrant youth program through the years and still going strong under Sonia's leadership and all who volunteer on Wednesdays, the influence goes on. And who knows what the impact will be of such effort. Not every youth will be called to be a minister as was the case for Lauren and myself, but every youth goes forth to fulfill what God has called them to be in life, their own ministry per se, and to do that work in love to the glory of God. How critical the ministry of FPC is in that process for that is why God has you here and that is what God wills for His church to do.

I have been so blessed!

With love,

