

**MY TOP TEN LIST OF THINGS
I HOPE YOU REMEMBER TO LIVE BY:**

10 Believe in each other.

When we are believed in, we are empowered. St. Mark indicates that Jesus could not perform any miracles in Nazareth because of the peoples' lack of faith in him. (*Mk 6:4-6*) I often ask couples coming in to get married how they feel to be believed in. They always say they feel valued, joyful and important. They were empowered. Trust in the goodness of your spouse, your kids, your parents. Granted, we can trust teens to be immature, but immaturity is not a sin, never has been. With reasonable boundaries, trust them, trust their goodness. If you assume the worst, they may live up to it. You wouldn't tell your kids not to rob a bank and then show them how to just to play it safe should they try. That's not putting any faith in them at all. It does not empower them in any way.

#9 Make love real.

Love is a great idea, but if it only remains an idea, it won't make any difference. The greatest gift a father can give his children is to love their mother. And the greatest gift a mother can give their children is to love their father. The love that created them will be in the air they breathe as they grow up.

#8 The Eucharist is not a reward for being good.

It is nourishment for people who are flawed, weak and in need of God's help. We are never worthy to receive Holy Communion, but that doesn't matter because it's not about our worthiness. It is about God's unconditional love for us.

#7 Stewardship is a way of life.

We are stewards of God's creation, of God's gifts and grace. Therefore, if we have problems with money in our parish, money is not the problem. It is our lack of gratitude for all we have.

#6 It's all gift.

Everything is God's gift to us. We earned none of it, especially the love that is shown us by others. When we try to earn love, whatever we get in return will not be love, for love is always pure gift.

#5 We are called to unity with one another, but not just so we will feel good together. It is so the world may come to believe in Jesus. Even the Church is not about the Church. It is to make the gospel of Jesus present and believable to the world.

#4 We are made for relationship.

It's ultimately always about us, not me or you. I am not the center of the universe. Neither are you, even if you are 16. A husband, by definition, is about his wife, and a wife, by definition, is about her husband. Being a parent is to be about the child. This is what gives joy to being husband, wife and parent.

#3 We must love people the way they are.

I recall the time a guy cut me off in traffic. The bumper sticker on his car read, "SMILE, GOD LOVES YOU!" I felt like hitting him, but am called to love him. We cannot love a dream or a memory. If we do not love people the way they are, we don't really love them at all. The great gift married people have is to have someone committed to love them anyway. And they witness that for the rest of us. That is why I have to love you, the people of this parish, the way you are.

#2 Without forgiveness, there is no future.

Jesus showed us what that love looks like. Ultimately, it looks like the cross, but not just in suffering. Jesus, though a victim, never played the role of a victim, and he never created a victim. Rather, he said, "*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" He broke the cycle of violence, and in so doing made peace possible in the world. If we don't forgive, there is no hope for peace.

#1 We are on this earth to learn how to love.

Since we were created in the divine image, and since we believe that God is love, the more loving we become, the more we image God, and the more true joy we will find in life. Some of its lessons are difficult, to be sure. But if we fail to learn how to love, we fail Humanity 101.