February 2012 --- Dean’s Message

There has been a great deal of emphasis put on “encouragement” lately, and I would like to share this pastoral perspective by the Rev. Dr. John Lombard.

I want to put in a good word for encouragement. It takes so little effort and does so much good. I find myself both the receiver as well as giver of encouragement and always with a deep sense of gratitude.

While many of us find ourselves offering and receiving encouragement in ways both great and small, there is no lack of wisdom about the topic in the larger world. Consider the words of a few notable (and not so well known) folk. “Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined (Henry David Thoreau).” “Never let the odds keep you from doing what you know in your heart you were meant to do (H. Jackson Brown, Jr.).” “What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly (Richard Bach).” “If one dream should fall and break into a thousand pieces, never be afraid to pick one of those pieces up and begin again (Flavia Weedn).” “When you feel like giving up, remember why you held on for so long in the first place (unknown).” “When one door closes another opens; but we so often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door, that we do not see the ones which open for us (Alexander Graham Bell).” “Risk more than others think is safe. Care more than others think is wise. Dream more than others think is practical. Expect more than others think is possible (Claude Bissell).” “Go for the moon. If you don’t get it, you’ll still be heading for a star (Willis Reed).” “Nine tenths of education is encouragement (Anatole France).”

“When you come to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on (Franklin D. Roosevelt).” “Everything will be okay in the end. If it’s not okay, it’s not the end (unknown).” “What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us (Henry S. Haskins).” “He who has a why to live can bear almost any how (Friedrich Nietzsche).” “God brings men into deep waters, not to drown them, but to cleanse them (John Augley).” “When it is dark enough, you can see the stars (Ralph Waldo Emerson).”

As you can see, there is no lack of profound thought and deep reflection when it comes to matters of encouragement. Yet, it is often in our every day when, in the course of the simplest of routines, we both receive and mediate encouragement to positive ends: creating community, building capacity, inspiring others, empowering some, proffering hope, demonstrating care, framing perspective, gleaning meaning, and redeeming failure.

I am persuaded that the world feels better and works better with plenty of encouragement. Tasks are more easily accomplished, dreams achieved, abilities expanded, relationships developed, lives healed, hope nurtured, help offered, and, overall, life looks better, is lived more deeply, and is fulfilled with a greater sense of purpose and meaning. Might we all be encouragers as we ourselves have been encouraged in our own lives, by the One who gave us life and with the aid of those among whom we have found good reason to embrace life.