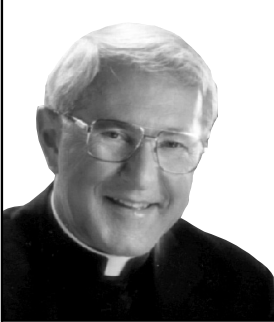


## HERALD OF HOPE



### On being a family of faith

Bishop  
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Sometimes families have moments of enormous joy, and sometimes they experience terrible numbing heartaches beyond description. The times of happiness become the most cherished and treasured of memories. Special weddings and anniversaries and great personal accomplishments, for example, or splendid new beginnings continue to shine like luminous gems in the minds of family members. Their mere recollection can reunite later generations in laughter or pride year after year. Like valuable heirlooms, these joys are passed on across the years and in the process become beautifully polished treasures. We have known all those realities in recent months as we celebrated the remarkable accomplishments of the archbishop, and we dare not forget them if we are a people of genuine gratitude.

Seasons of sadness also come to every family at some time in their journey

together through life. Tragic deaths, profound disappointments, losses and sorrows of all kinds are likewise part of human existence. Last week's sudden report has occasioned a deep sense of personal grief for the archbishop as well as for ourselves. Experience teaches us to be wary of first impressions or quick conclusions and suggests that we leave ample space for the care and the benefit of the doubt we instinctively feel for someone we have come to know and love so deeply.

To be a family is to pull together with deep respect for the inherent dignity of each person and mutual care for the wounded weaknesses we all bear. This may be especially important when we are disappointed by the actions of those we love.

To be a family of faith is to recognize that God alone is the true source of all unity and that God's healing mercy and truth are always

with us.

We know from our own experience of family heartaches that sad and difficult times can also become opportunities for coming together in mutual care and common support. People unite in their search for renewed strength and reclaimed purpose. They become one in their rediscovery of the power of God in their midst.

We make our own the joys and sorrows of those we love. We are never alone in our pilgrimage through life because others help carry our burdens and walk with us in our triumphs. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters all share each other's successes and failures. Over the years, both are woven together into a single fabric of human existence. Both are at the core of every family and every bond of friendship, and central to both success and failure is the presence of a loving God who alone and ultimately makes all things right.

Moreover, the God of Holy Week's painful confusion is also the God of Easter's victory over sin and death, and likewise the God of all the lavish gifts of Pentecost. Still, no one enters heaven without their scars and wounds. The longer we live, the more obvious is that truth. Those wounds don't go away, but rather

they become occasions for God's healing grace at the very core of everything that makes us a family of faith. The shining golden nails in the corpus of the cathedral's new central masterpiece is a stunning reminder of that perennial truth.

We are a people of faith, for we know without the faintest shadow of doubt that our healing God is with us all, sustaining us especially in our wounded weakness and holding our hands as we cross dangerous paths.

We are also a people of hope, for our God is not only with us during our journeys, but eventually welcomes us home with open arms and festivity whenever we arrive.

The one thing we absolutely owe each other is the charity (Rom 13:8) that lifts up the truth without sacrificing either compassion or kindness. As Paul said so clearly to his friends in Corinth, especially when singing the praises of true charity (I Cor 13:13), "Faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Therefore we enter this new moment "living the truth in love" (Eph 4:15) and remembering Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland with the respect and love he has earned from his dedicated public service in our midst for the past quarter of a century.