

Sunday, April 17, 2016  
EXPRESSIONS by Father Ed

## Fire Department



The Morro Bay Fire Chief, Steve Knuckles, will speak at the 8:30 and 10:30 Masses this Sunday. It is a proactive collaboration between neighbors, a reaching out to the wider community, offering information and providing valuable explanations of the many services of the Fire Department. I am very pleased to welcome the chief. As an added treat, a fire truck also will be present in front of the church between the two Masses.

Of all the first responders to emergencies, the Fire Department, Harbor Patrol, and Coast Guard are the best. They are user friendly, agreeable, and helpful. They are never critical or judgemental; they never levy fines. Even if a fault is obvious, like falling down stairs, swimming in rough water, or a car accident, these first responders are never negative. No wonder everyone likes them.

I have often compared the values of the fire department to the best spiritual principles. In the “Sermon on the Mount”, Jesus counselled mercy, kindness, and generosity, qualities evident in fire departments across the world. They are our Lone Rangers and Tantos, Supermen and Batmen, persons we intrinsically admire and trust. Their only mission is to help. Everyone calls them to assist family, e.g., those who cannot walk, carrying them up and down stairs, or picking them up when they fall. They even rescue animals. Fire personnel do home visits. They respond as rapidly as possible, but they have to put on proper clothing, hop into fire trucks, and drive to the necessary site, perhaps not arriving as quickly as people expect. They come prepared for every emergency. Sometimes, they are taking care of another crisis when they are called.

They are a model of service, fully aware that people are their first priority. Fire personnel live together, working in shifts, sacrificing their personal lives for the good of the wider community. They bond with each other by living in close quarters so that in emergencies they can easily cooperate, often in difficult and sometimes in dangerous circumstances. They keep themselves in good physical condition. Fighting fires requires that. They can run, pick up heavy equipment, climb ladders, roofs, and trees. They are strong, courageous, and optimistic, basic human qualities for every individual.

I often wonder how I can repay and express thanks to the Fire Department. Financial contributions to the Friends of the Fire Department are always welcome, and tax deductible. The parish regularly sends left over meals to save the firemen from buying and cooking meals. I do the same, sometimes even giving them Albertson’s gift cards. Real food is better than desserts. Never take their help for granted. We are very fortunate in Morro Bay to have a fire department. Not every community has one. Today is an excellent opportunity to let them know how much we appreciate them.