

FROM THE PASTOR

SEPTEMBER 19, 2021

TWENTY FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

A FULL SUNDAY AT ST. PAUL: This Sunday at St. Paul's is certainly a full one. It is Catechetical Sunday, the Sunday of the Blessing of the Pre-Cana Couples, and the installation of new squires.

CATECHETICAL SUNDAY: This Sunday reminds us that we have begun a New Year of Religious Formation. All the catechists will be present to receive a special blessing as they once again dedicate themselves to serving our young people, I am grateful to Mrs. Louise Shannon our Faith Formation Administrator. Finally, I am most sincerely grateful to all the catechists and volunteers. This year it is our grace and privilege to introduce to our parish **Ms. Lynn Mary Wilson**. Ms. Wilson has replaced Brother Joseph Bellizzi as the coordinator of our confirmation program and as director/coordinator of all levels of Religious Formation In this capacity she will work with Mrs. Louise Shannon to impart the uplifting truths of our faith to our young people. I have known Ms. Wilson for close to 35 years. She has an exceedingly impressive background in Religious Education, serving as a Formation Director for catechists in the diocese. She has worked, and still does, as an associate with Sadlier publishers, and is well known to every religious formation program in the diocese because of the many workshops she has given. Ms. Wilson has served as Confirmation coordinator at St. Matthew's Dix Hills and for the Extraordinary Form Confirmation Program. She has an extensive background in being a choirmaster for young people and has served as the Director of the Our Lady of the Angels Youth Choir. We welcome Lynn Wilson in the charity of Christ. Please introduce yourselves to her.

PRE-CANA COUPLES: Today the Pre-Cana couples will be blessed. When I first arrived at St. Paul over eight years ago, I was surprised to learn there was no parish Pre-Cana Program. I asked our parishioners Joe and Linda Curro to coordinate the program again. They did Pre-Cana in their home and every couple with whom they worked came to love them. We will be ever grateful to Joe and Linda who still coordinate the St. Paul's Food pantry. When through God's grace Bishop Murphy assigned Deacon Ray to St. Paul's, I asked him to coordinate the program. It is done in conjunction with St. Edwards since we generally have fewer than 10 weddings a year. As we know, ours is a small parish (that is why we have only one priest assigned). But due to the Covid shutdown we have many more weddings because so many had been postponed. We congratulate our couples today.

HOLY CROSS DAY: Tuesday of last week (September 14th) we celebrated the Feast of the Exultation of the Holy Cross. *O Holy Cross, most faithful, you are the noblest tree of all. No other tree can compare with your leaves, your flower, and your fruit.*

Through the Passion of Our Lord the Cross became a throne of glory, not gallows of infamy. Today, in her liturgy, the Church sings: *How radiant is that precious Cross which brought our salvation. Through the Cross we are victorious. With the Cross we shall reign. By the Cross all evil is destroyed, alleluia!*

The feast of the Holy Cross has its origin in the first centuries of Christianity. According to ancient testimony this commemoration began the day the Cross was found by the Empress St. Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great. It developed quickly in the Eastern Church and soon spread throughout all of Christendom. In Rome a solemn procession from the basilica of St. Mary Major to that of St. John Lateran took place to venerate the Holy Cross before Mass.

At the beginning for the seventh century the Persians ransacked Jerusalem. They destroyed many churches and took possession of the sacred relics. A few years later the Emperor Heraclius recovered them. According to pious tradition, the splendidly dressed monarch, in full regalia, personally wanted to carry the Holy Cross to its original place on Calvary. The weight became increasingly unbearable as he walked the Via Dolorosa. The Bishop of Jerusalem, Zechariah, explained to him that to carry the Holy Cross he must imitate the poverty of Christ, who bore it free of every earthly attachment. Heraclius immediately divested himself of the imperial garments and put on humble pilgrims' clothes. He was then able to carry the Holy Cross barefoot to the summit of Calvary.

As children we all learned how to make the sign of the Cross as an external sign of the profession of our faith. The Church makes use of the Holy Cross on her altars during Holy Mass and the Cross is displayed atop the church buildings. *As a tree of most savory fruit*, it is a powerful weapon for warding off all kinds of evil, and especially for instilling fear in the spiritual foes of our salvation. *Lord through the Holy Cross, free us from our enemies*, we pray each day before signing ourselves with the sign of the Cross.

One of the great Fathers of the Church, St. John of Damascus, teaches us: *The Cross is a shield against the devil as well as a trophy of victory. It is the promise that we will not be overcome by the angel of death. The Cross is God's instrument to lift*

those who have fallen and to support those still on their feet fighting. It is a crutch for the crippled and a guide for the wayward. It is our constant goal as we advance, the very wellspring of our body and soul. It drives away all evils, annihilates sin and draws down for us abundant goods. This is indeed the seed of the resurrection and the tree of eternal life.

The Cross is present in our lives in different ways. It may be manifest through sickness, poverty, tiredness, pain, scorn, false accusations, calumny, criticism, disrespect, or loneliness. Though hard to bear at times, the encounter with the Cross can become a source of purification, and when it is embraced with love, it becomes our life and joy. Embracing the Cross should lead us never to complain when suffering adversity and setbacks.

We pray: *Most honorable Cross of the Lord! Through You, mankind has been relieved of the curse. You are a sign of joy indeed, and of terror to our spiritual enemies; you are the help of Christians, the glory of kings, the strength of the just, the splendor of priests, a staff of power to your people, and a source of peace. Around You the Angels gather in awe: You are the Glory of Christ who grants great mercy to the world!*

PARISH PICNIC: Last Sunday, September 12th, we were blessed as a parish to enjoy one another's company at the parish picnic. It was a most happy day for all of us. The weather could not have been more spectacular. But more glorious than the weather was the joy of all of us in being together once again. Over 200 parishioners attended. Everyone told me that the hot dogs and hamburgers were never more delicious, and I felt the same way. (I had both a hot dog and a hamburger). Perhaps they tasted so good because we did not have the picnic last year and we were all so happy to be together again. Through the usual kindness and generosity of Trustee Emeritus Mr. Joe Palumbo, CEO of Top Banana, we had the Mr. Softee truck for the whole afternoon. Last call came at 4.00PM (not AM) ss at some other places. One of the joys was to see so many children at the picnic. Although there were amusements for them, our DJ seemed to have enchanted them because they were dancing and singing all afternoon. They were wonderful at the limbo and they loved Mr. Softee. Those who worked on the picnic are too numerous to mention. There were original parishioners, grandparents, grandchildren, confirmation children doing their service projects and so many. I am so grateful to Deacon ray and to Louise Shannon, the Knights of Columbus, Squires, Girl Scouts, Marian Guild Members. May God bless and reward them all.

VISIT OF BISHOP MURPHY: Bishop William F. Murphy is the Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, having served as Bishop from 2001 until 2017. Bishop Murphy has been a true father to me. It was he who appointed me Judicial Vicar in 2007 and he who asked Pope Benedict XVI to appoint me a Monsignor fifteen years ago. I will never forget that since the Bishop made every effort to see that the Holy Father did this before my mother's death. Both she and my sister and family were so happy because of this kindness. It was while he was Bishop that the renovation of the Church began. The Bishop had been scheduled to visit St. Paul's on Sunday August 22nd, but due to Tropical Storm Henri, the visit was rescheduled. Bishop Murphy will be coming to St. Paul on Sunday September 26th. He will celebrate the 10.30 Mass. Please make every effort to greet the Bishop that day. On that day the Bishop will solemnly enshrine a First-Class Relic (from the very bones) of St. Paul the Apostle in the High Alter. It had always been my fond hope to obtain this relic, but I was never able to do so. Finally, when I thought it was impossible through God' providence (there are no coincidences) one of our own parish families came forward to gift the relic of St. Paul to the parish. We will be ever grateful to Jacques, Elisabeth, and Elise Le Vaillant. And long after we are all forgotten, it will always be remembered that the relic of the Holy Apostle St. Paul is in our altar.

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS: As we are all aware the Covid-19 virus seems to ebb and flow. Most of us know very little of these matters. But out of an abundance of caution, we ask our parishioners to follow our diocesan protocols which have been explained here and in every parish since the churches opened in June 2020. At the time of Holy Communion, those receiving on the hand may continue to come forward as usual. May we ask those who would like to receive on the tongue (which is laudatory and perfectly fine) to come to the corners of the Sanctuary where the green kneeling cushions are placed after the others have received. Please line up there and individually come forward to kneel or stand to receive on the tongue. As pastor, I am very disposed to grant a dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass for those who may be paralyzed by fear to attend. If coming to Mass will cause one stress or anger, please simply stay home. Such should not be the fruit of the sacraments. Remember shortly before holy Communion the priest prays, "*Deliver us Lord...that we may be free from sin and safe from all distress...*" Please remember that per the Bishop's instructions the clergy and staff (including the ushers) of the parishes are not enforcers of these guidelines. We are here to serve, not to be police. God bless you all, and remember the teaching of St. Augustine, "*in omnia caritas-in all things charity.*"

In Jesus and Mary,
Monsignor James F. Pereda