

Saint Joseph CATHOLIC CHURCH

April 17, 2021

Saturday of the Second Week of Easter

Dear Parishioners:

A Blessed Easter Season to you all!

First off, I want to take the opportunity to thank everyone who had a part in the recent celebrations at our parish – whether throughout the season of Lent, Holy Week, or even now into the celebrations of the Easter Season! It was absolutely wonderful to see people gathering again in-person for our celebrations. As I have said throughout the past eleven months or so, whenever you are comfortable to return to in-person worship, we will be here. I cannot help but think of all the many gifts that have been offered to our parish, even in the midst of the ongoing pandemic. Thanks to all who: wonderfully decorated, undecorated, and again, decorated the church, our live-streaming crew, all who ministered at SJJ, PSR and Youth Group in assisting our parents in forming their children, those who sang as part of our COVID-sized vocal choirs, accompanied our celebrations with instruments, supported our newest Catholics on their RCIA journey, all who ministered at our liturgies, called and reached out to our homebound parishioners, who provided loving service to all those in need, the Parish Pastoral and Support Staff who daily minister in so many varied ways, all who have supported us with their prayers, presence, and monetary support, and all who joined voices, hearts, and prayers together throughout these days. I am awed and appreciative of your continued financial commitment, as well, to our community as once again, similar to Christmas 2020, this year's Easter collection exceeded our budget! Our community is certainly grateful for the blessings that God has given to us and it's always exciting to see how God continues to work through us. I pray that the joy of the Resurrection will fill our lives throughout these days and allow us to see the hope of emerging from this pandemic with renewed life. May we also continue to seek the Living Presence of Christ in our daily lives, and strive to be like the early Apostles and share joy with all whom we encounter in the midst of our lives' journeys. One never knows how a kind word or a gesture might make a difference...

Secondly, as we continue to welcome more and more people back to in-person worship, we do so knowing that COVID-19 remains a reality within our community, region, state and country. Our Parish Staff will continue to do our part in helping to sanitize, disinfect, and keep our facilities safe for you. Our attendance keeps growing on the weekends and we now have a real-time tracking chart of each weekend's average Mass attendance. We even saw a relatively large "COVID crowd" for last Sunday's Divine Mercy Prayer Service. When considering your own attendance or return to in-person Mass, you may visit www.sjohio.org/covid for this and use it as a way to gauge how full Masses are averaging in comparison to our COVID-19 capacity of 400 people per Mass. Please keep in mind that regardless of one's own vaccination status, we must continue monitoring ourselves for symptoms, wear required facial coverings that cover one's nose and mouth (unless you have a medical condition or are the presider) and be mindful

of our distance from other households. Also, if you are seated on the ends of a pew, please let those who arrive after you the opportunity either to move into the pew around you or please consider sliding over so that we might accommodate as many parishioners as possible. I prefer aisle seats as much as the next person, so I am not saying anyone has to give up their aisle seat. However, please do consider allowing people into the pew. In addition to the increasing in-person attendance, we are in the process of transitioning our Eucharistic Ministers to the Homebound to a somewhat regular visits. Throughout the pandemic, they have been calling our homebound parishioners, but vaccinations allow us to resume both in-home visitation and Communion to the Nursing Homes and Facilities in our parish boundaries in accordance with the regulations established by the facilities. I remain excited to see people returning and edified by the flexibility of our parishioners in continuing some many good works, albeit in different ways, throughout the past thirteen months since the shut-down of March 16, 2020.

Thirdly, I write sharing good news that our parishioner, Matt Lawler, is slated to be ordained by Bishop Edward Malesic on Saturday, May 1 at 10am. The Ordination will take place at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist and will be live-streamed on the Diocesan website (www.dioceseofcleveland.org). Since he has not yet received his assignment, we pray that he might be assigned to us! We also extend our congratulations to his entire family, especially his three adult kids Ryan, Rachael, and Kevin. His brother, Jim, and his family are also parishioners. Matt and his children have been parishioners for the last 25 years! Over the past five years of Diaconate formation, Matt has engaged in pastoral, academic, and spiritual work. As you would imagine, beyond working a full-time job having these on weekends and an evening each week adds up. Unfortunately, or fortunately, he didn't get to have me as a history professor LOL... Matt has been involved in many ways over the years within our parish community, and at four other parishes during his formation. He credits "volunteering with charitable ministries gave me a BIG push [towards the Diaconate]. It helped to open me up to the presence of the Holy Spirit and the amazing things that can be accomplished. Experiences like these left me wanting more of what my faith had to offer". We look forward to celebrating with him at his Mass of Thanksgiving at 10am on Sunday, May 2 with a COVID-style light reception afterwards. Congratulations and please know of our prayers, Matt!

And in conclusion, if you have yet to complete your response to the Diocesan survey about our parish the deadline has been extended. You may now do so by this coming Monday, April 19. You can access the survey at www.sjohio.org/survey. I thank everyone who has already completed it and look forward to receiving our results. As I wrote in the bulletin, volunteers from Parish Staff, Pastoral Council and Finance Council will meet with me and a representative of the survey designer to discuss our parish's results. When we have these results, they will be shared with our entire community. Have a blessed weekend!

St. Joseph, pray for us!

~Fr. Joe