



19 April 2021

Dear Parishioner:



***He is
Risen!!!!***

And what wonderful news that is for each and every one of us as we continue to celebrate this great Season of Easter, the Season of our redemption!

“Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred.*

*And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, **Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.***

*As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, **“Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.***

And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them.

With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.

*Then they said to each other, **“Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?”***

*So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, **“The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!”***

*Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and **how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.**” - Luke 24:13ff*

Alleluia!!!!

This Scripture passage from the Gospel of Luke is *not* just some story that is thousands of years old and has withstood the test of time. *It is our story, and continues not to just be written, but come to life, day after day after day . . . Sunday after Sunday! Our eyes are opened; our hearts burn within us. Not only is He made known to us in the breaking of the bread, but He is present to us in the Communion we receive! What a gift!!*



Over a year ago, for nearly four, *long* months, the vast majority of Roman Catholics did not have access to this wondrous gift. *But then*, on May 25th of last year, *in-person* worship returned at Our Lady of Victory, and the opportunity to move from *virtual* presence to an encounter with the *Real Presence* was again afforded each of us. *WHAT A BLESSING!*

We continue to be *grateful* to the many *good folks* . . . fellow parishioners . . . who day in and day out, from even before the time we returned to “in-person” worship, offer their time and talent in so many, many ways, but especially so that each and every individual who enters the Church building is welcomed, guided in safe practices before, during and after liturgy, and then, who faithfully and diligently assist in sanitizing the Church, entryways and restrooms so that the next time anyone gathers, they can be assured that they are entering a clean/sanitized environment.

The pandemic continues, but so does Jesus Christ, who has never stopped being present . . . *really, truly and totally present* in the Eucharist, and so does His Church and His Parish, Our Lady of Victory!

Prudence continues to be important, in particular for any in our population that are high risk, and the Bishops of Ohio recognize that which is why the *obligation from participating in Sunday Mass/Days of Obligation* continues to be suspended at this time.



We are all celebrating the blessing and good news of vaccines that have now been available since December and even better news that many, many are being vaccinated to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. What joy this is, as more and more individuals have been able to confidently and safely return from being *virtually* present to being *really* present . . . *re-engaging in the life of your faith community . . . re-engaging in active participation in that life*, and once again having access to the *Real Presence of Jesus Christ*, Eucharist, for which there is absolutely *no* substitute.

We will continue to *livestream* all Masses and other prayer experiences. Why? Because we know that there are those who not only are currently unable to join others for in-person worship but will continue to be unable to do so even after the pandemic is over, and it is important to not only connect them with the Lord in this way but keep them connected to the Body of Christ at Our Lady of Victory parish. We will continue to upload to Vimeo and YouTube, for all the same reasons. Again, this is done because it is the right thing to do and *necessary* for some, *not* because it is to provide a comfortable form of *virtual* worship for those who otherwise *can and should be worshipping in-person*.

Early on in this pandemic, I recall many conversations with many individuals as we collectively worked to support one another. Time and time again I heard about a variety of “good things” that had been born out of the “Stay-at-Home” orders, not the least of which daily life looked different. There was

no longer the rat-race of a calendar filled with activities and places to be, especially for families. More frequent occurrences of family dinner time became a reality. More quality family time was available. And the list goes on. *What mattered . . . the PRIORITIES of our lives, were reclaimed.*

As more have been vaccinated and as various activities have slowly “opened” up, so many of the activities and schedules that competed for these *valuable* fruits “pre-pandemic” were being made accessible, and once again, competing and *consuming* much of the time we had come to value during these past many months . . . *competing with the PRIORITIES we had previously reclaimed.*

My friends, consider all of the activities that at least many of us have either *not* suspended or have, once again, *added* to our schedules. If these have been part of our daily routines or are now starting to become part of these routines, again, then, as Cardinal Timothy Dolan recently wrote to the faithful of the Archdiocese of New York (quoting a conversation he had with one of his parish priests who had encountered many of his parishioners in a grocery store expressing how much they *missed* Mass):

“Here you are in a crowded store shopping, taking your time, in contact with items touched by hundreds of people. Church is a lot safer! Come back to get *food* for your *soul*!”

The Cardinal went on to write: “It’s time to get back to Sunday Mass! Wear masks, yes! Get tested, you bet! Wash hands, please! Get vaccinated as soon as you can, sure! Keep social distancing, of course! Don’t go if you’re sick, elderly or your health is shaky, obviously! Don’t shake hands!”

A friend recently shared with me how, in a neighboring city, various athletic groups are advertising for kids to join and be involved in their team sport programs. One flyer said something along these lines, “Getting your kids out and connected with others is physically, psychologically, and emotionally important.” *How much more important is involvement in the Church for a family of all ages!? How much more important is the Real Presence of Jesus Christ!?*

“Be grateful good folks carefully sanitize the Church after each Mass. But, for God’s sake, get back to Sunday Mass! We need medicine! We need food for the soul! We need vaccination from sin, Satan and eternal death! We need herd immunity as sheep under Christ our Good Shepherd. All this we behold at Mass! How can we stay away?”

For any and all who depend upon and need *virtual* prayer, it is there for you, and so are we. For any and all who have become *comfortable* with *virtual* prayer but otherwise are able to gather *in-person*, it’s time! It’s time to return *safely* to the *Real Presence* of Jesus Christ! For it is from that encounter that *we become a joyful and powerful presence for and to others, drawing them to Jesus Christ, the Way . . . the Truth . . . the Life!*

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Reverend Michael A. Matusz,
Pastor



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Perhaps, YOU?

• • • for many • • •

• • • IT IS TIME • • •

