

June 27-28, 2020

Thoughts from the pastor,

There are many things to cover in this letter. Some of you were at the 10:30 Mass last Sunday. It was a wonderful conclusion to a major project that was taken on under the leadership of Fr. Hunke, the renovation of the church interior. The addition of the icon of St. Thomas More that was dedicated and blessed at that Mass was a great way to finish off that project. Fr. Richard Reiser did a great job explaining the icon and the patron saint of this parish in his homily. Fr. Hunke was able to tie it all together with the blessing. Along with that, the image of Divine Mercy and St. Faustina were rehung this past week, along with a picture of St. Pope John Paul II in prayer next to those pictures. These images exemplify one of the main things for which STM has been known. This is not the end of all work that will ever happen in the church but it is a wonderful conclusion to a major effort on your part. It was all possible because of your generosity and the leadership of Fr. Hunke.

In the past couple weeks STM has been blessed with another generous gift. Joan Zimola was a parishioner for many years. She passed away last year. Her estate has finally been settled. She was never married and worked hard all her life. She left a major part of her estate to be divided between STM School, Holy Cross, and Mercy High School. These three were obviously important enough to her that she wanted to help them out. The result for STM was an addition to the STM Educational Endowment of \$350,000. Because of the wishes she stated through her will, this was set up as an irrevocable account and so it will provide an income of approximately \$17,000 per year for as long as the school exists. Especially in these uncertain times, this kind of gift is a true blessing. Please pray for Joan as our way of thanking her. STM has had many such gifts over the years, which is why we continue to have Masses said for the donors to our endowments. We have a school endowment and a parish endowment.

This weekend you can pick up some great reading material in the narthex of the church. The books are there for the taking. These are specifically reading material about the Catholic faith. I have other books that I have received over this past year that I may put out at our next parish festival. Hopefully we will be able to have one this year. With the Covid-19 virus, it is still uncertain how that would work.

This will be my last "Thoughts from the pastor" letter at STM. Fr. Lorig will be taking over that role as pastor this week. As I become the senior associate pastor, it will be important for us to get to know Fr. Lorig. You will get to know him as pastor. I will be getting to know him on several other levels. This is one of the interesting aspects of priesthood, getting to know new housemates. It is a little like heading off to college and wondering who your roommate(s) will be. But this is a little more than a housemate. Priests in a rectory must deal with each other on many different levels.

This is not totally new for me, but is a kind of role reversal. In the first twelve years of my priesthood, I was the assistant or associate who needed to work with the older and more experienced priest. I lived with six different pastors in those twelve years. Three of them were

very easy for me to work with. Three were a real challenge. As these changed from one to another, it was a little like getting divorced and being assigned a new spouse. Even though the Archbishop and the Personnel Board do try to take personalities into consideration as they make assignments, there is still that reality that we don't choose who we are assigned with. There are times when we can make a request, and this is one of those times. I actually approached Fr. Lorig with the idea of him being the pastor of this new configuration of parishes.

For priests in a rectory, it is not just that we need to have a work relationship. Many of you have that challenge. You must figure out how to get along with your colleagues, but then you get to go home. You must also keep learning how to get along with that person you chose to marry when you get home. Both are different kinds of challenges. In a rectory it is a combination of both. Our work environment is our home. Our college is not our spouse but we must share a living space for an extended time. During that time, many different aspects of life come up.

It is suggested by some that we don't talk religion or politics at work. What if your work is all about teaching people about religion and helping people to understand how that affects their everyday life, even politics? Being a priest in this kind of situation is the test of what it means to be a follower of Christ. We are in a country that is being torn apart by divisions that are looked at as reasons to hate each other, Christians are challenged to learn to love our enemies. Please do not get me wrong. I am not saying that Fr. Lorig is an enemy. We are just unknowns in each other's lives. What we have in common is our deep love of Jesus, and our desire to serve Him. That has to continue to be primary.

In the past year at STM, I have tried to teach what I have been trying to teach for many years as a priest. Not everyone agrees with every aspect. That's one of the realities of being a priest also. We are asked to teach the Gospel, which includes helping people understand the reality of sin. That is where it gets tricky. We are being taught to be tolerant, except for people who disagree with our views on what sin is. Then we are told that we should be intolerant. That is when we are encouraged to hate. This cycle happens with the sin of prejudice. It also happens with sexual sin, or the consequence of sexual sin, which is abortion. All of it ends with people hating each other.

How does this apply to my working with Fr. Lorig? Look at the different relationships you have in your life, your spouse, your children, your coworkers, your neighbors. I'm willing to bet that many of them are filled with tension as soon as you start talking about things that really matter. Fr. Lorig and I will be testing these waters. The exciting part is that we will be doing this one on the basis of the love that Jesus has taught us, so we will be fine. As I do it, I will be praying for you as you try to work through the important relationships in your life.

God bless you all,  
Fr. Frank Baumert, pastor