

Dear Parishioners at St. Thomas,

Although summer is typically laid back in most parishes, this doesn't seem to be the case at St. Thomas. We are in transition. Our new employees, Jessica Brown, Leann Plant and Mindy Sadler are getting adjusted and doing rather well in their new roles. Funerals continue, and I am always grateful for the many people who so freely give of their time to minister to the grieving families: our music ministry, altar servers, and those who help serve the funeral receptions. Last week the parish was teeming with young children attending Vacation Bible School. It was wonderful.

My soul was lifted in your generous response to the Yellowstone Valley Flood Appeal. The contributions have not yet been tallied, but I am grateful for our parish families who reached out in love helping the victims of the flooding. This appeal was in the midst of our Annual Catholic Diocesan Appeal (Care & Share). By the way, I am sure St. Thomas is among the leaders of parishes throughout our diocese in their support of this annual appeal monetarily and with the percentage of parish families contributing. This collection is critical for the day-to-day operations of the diocese.

Thanks to the efforts of many parishioners, our second annual Cornhole Tournament went off without a hitch. It was well organized and there were plenty of game-boards. The weather cooperated with temperatures in the 70's. Both children and adults had a great time and enjoyed the food truck's tacos and nachos.

Last week I was able to attend the ordination of Bishop-Elect Jeffrey Fleming in Great Falls. Upon the retirement of Bishop Warfel, he will immediately step into the role. I was asked to serve as his assistant during the ordination ritual. I simply asked the principal-consecrating Bishop, our own Bishop Warfel, to ordain Fr. Jeffrey Fleming to the responsibilities of the episcopate. Holy Spirit Church was filled with representation from our diocese and Helena. We welcome with great joy our new bishop, Bishop Fleming! He will be visiting our parish soon. We will have to invite him to our Cornhole tournament next June!

Early this week I attended the funeral Mass at St. Peter's in Wibaux for Harry Beggar, the father of our faithful employee, Joyce Hollowell. After my arrival, the Pastor of St. Peter's, Fr. Jose Panickomveli asked me to preside at the funeral. I told Fr. Jose that as pastor, he should preside. But he insisted. Luckily, Deacon Rick Miske preached the funeral homily doing a wonderful job capturing the life of faith so present in Harry and his wife, Elaine. It was an honor to be able to preside at the funeral Mass of such a good, faith-filled man. I was reminded of the importance of strong marriages and families in the life of the church and society.

Enjoy the rest of the summer. It will go by quickly. Once again, I realize how easy it is to be grateful for the goodness and commitment of our parish family. I hear it often from visitors that we have a great parish community. They are right! Know that I am grateful to you as you so clearly reveal the light of Christ to our world through the actions of your lives.

Stay alive in Christ,

Fr. Steve Zabrocki, Pastor