

Friends of Immaculate Conception Parish and School Community,

I am very grateful and excited to be with you! I hope that as we begin this next chapter of our lives as a parish family that we remember the words of this weekend's second reading that we are "surrounded by a cloud of witnesses" especially those who have helped us to grow in faith such as our family, teachers, priests, and one another! Further, I would be remiss if I did not mention in gratitude my late predecessor of Fr. Monty who had everything very organized and left a great foundation for me to build upon. I also don't think that it is a coincidence that my tenure with you began around a feast day of our Lady (the Assumption on August 15) as Mary, the Immaculate Conception is our patroness! I also challenge you to thank a person in your life that has helped you grow in faith and witness to you. We cannot know or live our faith without our Lord. We cannot know and live our faith without our Lord working through one another. Our Foundation is strong because of these witnesses.

Speaking of foundation, I am grateful for my family, especially my father whom I hope that you will get to know. He, along with my late mother, instilled in me a faith that is honest and real. Growing up in southern Clearfield County (Coalport) the farthest Southern point of our diocese, and going to Glendale School District, they instilled in me this gift of faith that I may not live out perfectly, but honestly. With my parents I have been blessed with my brother (Matthew) and his Fiancé (Heather) with my nephew Zaidyn and my nieces Emma and Sophia. I also have a seven-year-old Weimaraner whose name is Linus. I also see this assignment as providential on my Priestly journey. I entered the Seminary while also going to Gannon University (even though I am a Penn State Fan 😊). The final meeting for that interview happened at the offices of ICC in late July/early August of 2003 as I met the then Rector/Vice-Rector here. Believe it or not you have been part of my faith journey and didn't even know it! I love being a priest and have been blessed in every assignment as I was ordained on a very hot June 10, 2011, evening. I was first assigned to Our Lady of Peace, Erie (2011-2013); and then to full time Chaplain/Campus Ministry at Cathedral Preparatory and Weekend Assistant at St. Jude the Apostle (2013-2018). Then my journey took me outside the city to being pastor of St. Francis Xavier, McKean, while still serving at Prep. As I love being a priest, I love working towards helping us all know the gift of our Faith and Church through the Eucharist and Evangelization. That is why I am also looking forward to working with and being with our youth at the School, Faith Formation, and other activities.

The foundation of faith is a constant in life that allows us to live to our full purpose and potential. Faith is also meant to be lived out in our talents, time, and hobbies. I am thankful the Lord has blessed me with a love for the outdoors, biking, enjoying the seasons, cooking (or at least attempting to). I also love anything Coca Cola, Pittsburgh Steelers, and Penn State. I credit the love for the last two because of growing up in Clearfield County.

You may be wondering what does the future hold for us? I don't know for certain, but thanks to the great foundation laid by Fr. Monty and you as the faithful parishioners, I see nothing but walking "the way" (the term used by the early church to teach the faith) with you. I am not coming with an agenda, just promising to the best of my ability transparency and openness to Eucharist, Evangelization, and support of Vocations. That is

why I ask for your prayers and patience. I hope to know what is important to you. That is why you will receive a lot of questions from me. Now I know the way will not always be perfect as there may be a change or two that you may not like that we have to make; or we may be able to offer a new perspective on a great opportunity already present. Whatever the case may be, I ask for your prayers and patience. I also ask that you offer me a time to get to know you and what is important to you. I hope that this does not sound too forward, but I would always be open to an invitation to meet you, have dinner, watch a Steelers Game, a high school game your son/daughter may be in, a hike to enjoy the autumn, enjoy a beverage, etc. Although we lead busy lives I will be as present as I can be as I am eager to get to know you as well. Please don't hesitate to ask.

With the patience piece, I also suggest that things may not always be how they were. For instance, being blessed to work in High school ministry for twelve years, I have the blessing of celebrating many weddings. That is why there will be a fair number of Saturdays from time to time that you may not see me. I also am involved in the Divine Mercy Encounter Retreat program that may take me away from a weekend here and there. Further, with my involvement at the college, there may be a time or two that we will have coverage so I can be with them at an event, conference, etc... I also love to help us better ourselves on this journey so you may see me away at a Conference here and there as well as leading other retreats especially Confirmation Retreats throughout the diocese. Whatever the case, I offer you as much time as I can while operating in a way that may be a bit different than what you may be used to. But again, I will be present to you/us as possible as I am eager to get to know you. Furthermore, as you know my assignment in addition to being at ICC is also to the University and St. Eusebius and St. Richards. Things may be a bit different but again, I pledge to be as present as possible.

That is why as we begin our time together, I also offer us a challenge to support more Vocations, especially to the priesthood. We all have a call to fulfill. The priesthood begins with the encouragement of the Lord raising young men in our midst among us to help us on that journey. Part of my assignment as you know is also to be present at the University as well as the faithful of East Brady/Rimersburg. Part of this reality is that we simply do not have enough priests (and currently have a few pastoral openings through the diocese that do not have any pastor at all). I hope and pray our time together will help encourage us to fulfill our purpose and vocation and inspire many young men to be open to this worthy call.

I am not perfect and do not promise that as I will make mistakes. All I am asking for is prayer and patience and I cannot wait to see how we will one day be numbered God-willing among that "cloud of witnesses". As I continue to unpack and find various routes to walk Linus, if you have any questions, needs, concerns, etc., please feel free to email or call anytime. (However, in transparency, I never have and will not respond to any anonymous feedback as I hope that we can always have an honest conversation good or challenging). Please don't hesitate to introduce yourself many times! But again, please know how happy I am to be with you and excited to grow together through the intercession of our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. May she PRAY FOR US!

In the Lord,
Fr. Jason



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