

Dear Parish Family,

As I drive through the streets of our county, I noticed its beauty, the green trees in the mountains, the lovely flowers that decorate the yards of our community, and as I drive down Kennedy Avenue and look at our House of Worship, I smile and thank God for this wonderful parish that I am proud to say I serve as the Pastor.

As your pastor, I am thankful to God for the many blessings He continually bestows upon us. We are always in need of something or someone and I thank our God that my anxieties as the man in charge are so many times lessened because of your continued prayers and support. We are a parish that has been blessed with so many good people who respond with their time, talent and treasure to the needs of our parish.

It is because of you and your generosity that members of our parish family are able to work so hard each week to make our parish plant - the Church, Cemetery, and Church Grounds look so welcoming and inviting. As you all know by now, I am a man who believes that everything must be in its place and looking perfect. When Bishop Serratelli would make his pastoral visits to us, he would always say: "John you have the most manicured property in the diocese," and our dear friend, the late Patricia Dolan, said to me once: "Father, the church is located in the wrong place in town, it should be on Main Street for all to see its beauty as they drive by." For those two comments, from our retired Bishop and late Trustee we should all be very proud.

As I stated, our parish is always in need of something or someone. I thank God that He inspires people to come forward and give of themselves in service to the Church. It is my prayer, as we begin a new season of parish events and activities, still in the midst of a pandemic, that more members of our parish family will come forward and sacrifice their time, talent and treasure by volunteering to help Saint Thomas of Aquin Parish with the needs which we have. I ask you to consider how you might offer your service to our Church. What is it that you can do to lend a helping hand in our parish's life and growth? Remember that our Lord calls each of us to respond to the needs we have. How will you respond to that call of the Lord to be of service to Saint Thomas of Aquin Parish?

Once again we are enjoying the beauty of God's creation all around us as we transition from Summer to Fall, and then from Fall to Winter. This is one of my favorite times of the year as the temperatures are more pleasant and invigorating. We live in such a beautiful part of the country as the Autumn leaves fill the trees with brilliant colors making the hills of Sussex County look like gigantic multi-colored flowers! Then, as the weather gets even cooler and the winds pick up, those same beautiful leaves fall as the trees are left to face the winter "alone".

As we move closer to the cold and flu season, I ask that with the COVID-19 Variant still invading our country that we not get cavalier with our protecting each other. I had my 6 month visit to my Primary Care Physician this past week, and she reminded me that, with some of my compromising issues, I should wear a mask as much as possible while in an inside setting, for example Church. Taking her advice, I encourage all of us, if we feel the need, vaccinated or unvaccinated, to wear a mask when attending Mass and in any other indoor setting, it is for our own protection and that of our sisters and brothers. Remember we are a Pro-Life Church!

Let us continue to pray for each other, for our world, country, state and church.

Stay well. Stay Safe. See the good in everyday!

In His Love,

*Father John*