

BY THE WAY . . .

- **Absence and the heart . . .** There is an old saying that “absence makes the heart grow fonder.” In other words, when something that we may have taken for granted is taken away from us, we begin to appreciate it more, and long for its return.

I had a discussion along that line with one of my old altar servers from Montville. He was always a pretty thoughtful guy, and he was commenting on how his church attendance was somewhat lackadaisical until Covid 19 closed the churches of New Jersey. Then, when he could no longer have what he had somewhat taken for granted, then he realized that importance of what he was missing, and longed for it. He told me that on Good Friday he actually stood on the front steps of his parish church in front of the locked doors and shed a few tears at not being able to participate in the liturgy which, for him, was always the high point of the liturgical year.

I know that he is not alone. I have witnessed a number of people praying in front of the locked doors of our own church, and have also heard the comments of several parishioners on what a relief it is to finally “get back home,” and finally be able to receive Our Lord in Holy Communion again.

I know that many of our parishioners have very much enjoyed our Sunday (and even daily) live stream Masses. We have received many comments –

--- I like being able to watch from the comfort of my own home;

--- I like being able to turn it on whenever I want;

--- I find it more meaningful to watch at the end of the day when I am in a more reflective mood;

--- I find it easier to pray without the distractions of the other parishioners;

--- I like having my cup of coffee with me at Mass (it will shock a few people to know that one of our 8:30 AM regulars often brings coffee to church);

--- My dogs like coming to Mass and I like having them with me.

As attractive as all those considerations are, I hope that they are slowly being trumped by a longing for the Eucharist, the Body of Christ, the Bread of Life. I hope that in our hearts there is a growing reconsideration of and longing for Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Christ. In the words of the 1974 Aretha Franklin hit, “ain’t nothing like the real thing.”

This past Friday I presided at the Graduation Mass for Saint Anthony School’s 108th graduating class. I mentioned to them that while their Eighth Grade experience had been unusual and perhaps at times unsettling, still the Covid 19 experience had provided them with some remarkable opportunities for growth. Their experience has provided them with the opportunity to reflect on family, community, patience, ingenuity, and self-reliance in ways that surpass what we could ordinarily provide. I told them that I was looking forward to the ways their eighth grade experience of “being alone together,” was going to bear fruit in the future.

May this time bear fruit in deeper faith and longing for the Eucharist in all of our lives.

- Thank you to recent **Lincoln Middle School graduate Jack Michel** for his very generous gift to Saint Anthony’s Food Pantry. Jack opted to forego graduation gifts, and instead, with the help of his parents Bob and Kimberly, made a \$250 donation of food and Shop Rite gift cards to help feed the hungry through our parish food pantry. Jack will be attending Passaic County Vocational Technical High School in September and he goes with our prayers and good wishes.

- If you have noticed a flurry of activity in the garden behind the church and rectory, this is the work of two of our parishioners, Robyn and Dennis Spycaboer. The Spycaboers have volunteered to help freshen and upgrade the gardens around the church, and we are grateful for their help in this **church beautification project**.

- Thank you to all the parishioners who have proved to be so cooperative in following the various Covid 19 protocols, especially wearing masks and socially distanced sitting. Thank you also to the ushers who have been so very helpful in guiding us through these arrangements.

The **one area we could use a little more help** with is leaving the church in a timely manner at the end of Mass so that our maintenance staff have enough time to sanitize the church between Masses.

- During a time of health pandemic, social unrest, and national elections, I offer the following **Prayer for our Nation.**

*O God, who arrange all things according to a wonderful design,
Graciously receive the prayers
we pour out to you for our country,
that, through the wisdom of its leaders and the integrity of its citizens,
harmony and justice may be assured
and lasting prosperity come with peace.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

God bless you all,

Father Ray



Deacon Jerry Fadlalla, Jack, Kimberly and Bob Michel



Robyn and Dennis Spyckaboer