

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Before I leave for my annual retreat and some time with my family in Maine, I want to share with you two Mass announcements, two thank yous and two invitations.

With most people vaccinated and feeling safe about returning to indoor gatherings, and the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation now removed, the 9:00 Mass on Sundays will be reinstated beginning September 12.

When the pandemic began in March of last year and many parishioners found themselves no longer having to leave home early in order to commute to work, daily Mass was moved from 7 am to 8 am. As it turned out, many of the core of parishioners who have been attending daily Mass for years have expressed to me that they prefer the daily Mass at 8:00. I have decided, then, to keep our daily Mass at 8 am; the Mass will continue to be live-streamed.

I thought the Parish Picnic last Sunday was a great success. I've received many compliments and expressions of gratitude since—but all the thanks go to the parish staff, who came up with the idea and did all the work of organization. I also want to acknowledge and thank our Knights of Columbus and all the volunteers who were at the picnic early and stayed through the cleanup. I hope the picnic can become an annual tradition.

On behalf of Bishop Checchio, and for myself, I express deep gratitude to all who participated in this year's Bishop's Annual Appeal. St. Mary's can take pride in the fact that we once again went over our goal—not pride simply in achieving a monetary benchmark, but in the fact that we contributed to enhancing the quality of life for the many, many people who are helped by the different ministries of our diocese, like Catholic Charities, the Office of Discipleship Formation for Children, our Catholics schools and the Office of Human Life and Dignity. Here are the nearly complete Appeal totals for the parish:

Goal: \$312,000

Pledges Received: \$364,942 (117% of goal)

Rebate to the Parish: \$26,471

Considering the challenges faced by our world and nation generally, and each of us individually, this last year-and-a-half, as your pastor I invite and encourage you to review in these days your personal

relationship with Jesus Christ. As we'll hear St. Peter say in our Gospel reading on Sunday, it is Jesus alone who has "*the words of eternal life*" (Jn 6:68). If you feel that relationship needs renewing or strengthening, I urge you to participate in "Discovering Christ," a seven-week experience designed to help participants know, love and serve Christ more deeply. "Discovering Christ" begins on Tuesday, September 21, and registrations are being taken beginning next weekend. More information about "Discovering Christ" can be found in the bulletin and the parish website.

Finally, I invite you to celebrate this Year of St. Joseph by attending St. Mary's Parish Day of Recollection on Saturday morning and afternoon, September 25, at St. Joseph Shrine in Sterling. More details about the Day are in the bulletin and on the website and additional information will be forthcoming in the weeks ahead, but you can already register. I look forward to this day of prayer and reflection with many of you.

I will be keeping you all in my prayer during retreat. Please pray for me, for all who serve you at St. Mary's and for all our parishioners in special need.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr.

Rev. Msgr. William Benwell

Pastor