

Thanking God for 38 Year of Blessings!

Happy Birthday, OLHOC! On Saturday, September 15, our parish will complete its first 38 years. Our tradition in recent years has been to celebrate our birthday on the Sunday before September 15. This is why this Sunday, Sept. 9, we are giving thanks to God for 38 years of blessings and praying that God will continue pouring His love on our parish and all our parishioners for many, many more years!

Everything we have comes from God.: “ Dear brothers and sisters, all good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...” (Letter of St. James, 1:17). St Ignatius of Loyola reminded us that one of the greatest virtues is to be grateful. The greatest gift we receive every day of our lives, even when we are struggling and suffering, is God’s love. God sent His Son to redeem us and demonstrate His love to each one of us. Following Jesus’ return to Heaven, His Ascension, Jesus continues sending us the Holy Spirit.

As we celebrate our 38th birthday as a parish, everyone is invited to reflect on the blessings we received in the last 12 months and on the challenges we face in the coming 12 months. We have just done so in our annual retreat of our two Parish Councils. Looking back, we can all be proud of the continued progress on the formation of our children and our youth (religious education for 400 children and increased participation of our youth in parish activities). There was also unanimity on the successful completion of Phase 1 of our Capital Campaign: the renovation of our place of worship (new tile and pews). Looking ahead, our Parish Councils came up with five priority actions with one Council member taking the lead and reporting to us within two months on its feasibility. We will keep you informed.

The two Councils also expressed full support for the proposed gradual implementation of Phases 2-3 of our Capital Campaign, including its first priority project: building sliding doors in the Social Hall so as to provide two additional rooms for meetings when needed. This would allow us to make maximum use of our Social Hall, adding flexibility; at any time, our Social Hall could be used in its entirety (as now), or could be divided into two or three large meeting rooms. We are now proceeding with obtaining the approval of the Archdiocese. We will keep you informed.

We also discussed at our Councils’ Retreat the current crisis faced by the Church. I had spoken already about it from the pulpit. I had written about it in my earlier columns and we had shared various documents from the Archdiocese. But more sharing of information can be done as the Church crisis needs all our attention. How can we ignore the suffering of the abuse victims and their families? Communication is very important. Several of you have suggested that we should have some small group discussions, where as your pastor, I can hear your concerns and respond to your questions. Your feedback is very important. Several months ago, we put a **suggestion box** in the Narthex. I encourage you to use it in addition to contacting me directly (phone or email). We are all suffering for the pain of the clergy’s abuse victims; my heart is bleeding for them. We need to pray for them and their families. We need to pray for the purification of the church. We need to deepen our relationship with Jesus, the head of our Church.

On a personal note, I would like to use this opportunity to express again my thanks to all of you for your prayers and get-well notes when I was recovering from open heart surgery this past May and June. God listened to your prayers! Praise the Lord! I have now been back for nearly two months and every new day God gives me is a true blessing. Every morning, I pray that God will continue to give me the strength and energy to serve you on that day! On September 15, I will have completed eight years of service at OLHOC: 8 years out of my 9 years of priesthood! You are truly my family. You are the ones who make our parish vibrant. You are the ones who evangelize and make everyone welcome in our parish. You are the ones who volunteer to lead and assist the many ongoing activities at OLHOC. I thank God for all the blessings you pour upon our parish. You are truly inspired by the Holy Spirit! May God keep sending His Spirit upon you! May the Holy Spirit make you feel the love God has for each one of you.

May God keep blessing our parish and our parishioners!

One in Christ,
Fr. Alain