



“River Catholics”
ST. MARY’S PARISH, Evans Mills
ST. PAUL’S PARISH, Black River

www.rivercatholics.org

24 March 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

Over a year has passed since our journey through these unprecedented days began. Many have endured suffering and hardship due to COVID. Our parishes, and the priests of the diocese, have grieved the untimely death of Fr. Jazmines, and you have welcomed a new pastor. In the face of the coronavirus, each day is accompanied by the question, *when will this be over?* Our feelings and emotions swing from anxiety, concern, loneliness, fear or anger to moments of resolution and calm. This past year has been a most challenging time, one that has asked and, for a time, will continue to ask difficult adjustments and changes from us. We have, and will continue to endure, yet are grateful we can come together as a faith community, albeit with safety measures in place, but once again sharing in the Sacraments and praising our God.

Visibly and physically made real in those gatherings is the truth that we are not alone, a reality seemingly absent in these days. Yet nothing could be further from the truth, for as we *all* journey these days, we are one in faith as we do so. **WE**, who gather to celebrate the mysteries of our faith, are the church; undaunted, united, strengthened, renewed, embraced and upheld by the faith each of us claims as our own, and most importantly by Christ Jesus, Himself, whose resurrection we will very soon celebrate. A celebration that brings us the greatest of hope and the promise of new life.

As many of you are aware public Masses began in our diocese several months ago, provided parishes submitted reopening plans consistent with CDC and state requirements and mandates from Bishop LaValley. All, of course, intended to create and maintain a safe environment for prayer and worship. This we have done with great success. Our parish churches of St. Mary and St. Paul share in the Eucharist almost every day of the week and with a regular Sunday Mass schedule and the Sacrament of Reconciliation is available before each Mass (behind the screen only, for now). Our buildings are sanitized after **each** Mass, members of the congregation wear face masks throughout Mass (as required by health officials *and* Bishop LaValley) and those not living in the same household socially distance themselves from each other. There is only one thing missing... more of the faithful members of our parishes. I want to assure you the safety measures in place are being followed and maintained, so if you are still a little wary or have concerns, I certainly understand, but likewise want to encourage you to return to in-person Masses, sharing with our faith community in the Sacrament of Christ’s Body and Blood.

I want to invite your attention to the website for our parishes, www.rivercatholics.org. The title of our page derives from the fact that our parish communities lie along the winding paths of the Black and Indian Rivers, waters ever new, like the waters of Baptism. The site has recently been relaunched and is **all new**. Many new additions, too many to count, but worth a look if you are online. I also want to extend my great appreciation, on behalf of our parishes, for the ongoing and generous financial support many of you have been able to continue to offer, even as we have been apart. That support allows us to continue the mission of the local and universal church.

I look forward to meeting you in person and getting to know you better. Wishing you the continued blessings and graces of this Holy season and the profound hope to be found in our Lord’s resurrection.

Yours in Christ,