

The Roman Catholic Parishes of Cape Elizabeth, Scarborough, and South Portland, Maine

Dear Parishioners,

In this upcoming Sunday's readings, Jesus tells his disciples that he will, "ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate." As we get closer to the end of the Easter Season, we look forward to Jesus' Ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. As Pope Francis said, *The Holy Spirit transforms and renews us, creates harmony and unity, and gives us courage and joy for the mission.* This week, as we celebrate Ascension Thursday, let us be open and mindful of the work of the Spirit in our lives.

Wednesday, May 20 at 4PM, we will be posting our taped Mass for celebrating the Ascension of the Lord. The Catholic Church celebrates the Ascension of the Lord 40 days after Jesus' Resurrection as a Holy Day of Obligation. Although the obligation for attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation has been dispensed during this pandemic, it is our hope that you will draw closer to Christ through this celebration.

Thank you for joining us each weekend for our Sunday Mass. We are sure you noticed that the sound this past Sunday has greatly improved. Thank you for your patience and dedication while we worked through the technical issues. We will be continuing to tape the celebration of Mass at St. Bartholomew until our churches can be opened.

Bishop Deeley has been researching various guidelines, communicating with fellow Bishops from around the country, communicating with Governor Mills, the Maine CDC and with the leadership from here in our diocese to establish the protocols to slowly reopen our churches beginning June 1. Our staff will be looking at the protocols and developing a plan that will allow parishioners to return to the Sacrament of the Eucharist while remaining safe. We will communicate the procedures and protocols once they have been finalized. We will continue to offer our taped Mass as an option until our churches can be fully opened and all parishioners can safely attend.

This past Tuesday, our plan to merge our cluster into one canonical parish was presented to the Presbyteral Council and the College of Consultors. I brought a representative from our Pastoral and Finance Councils with me to make this presentation. Our request was well received by all. They recommended to Bishop Deeley that we create a new canonical parish. On May 26, our request will be brought to the Diocesan Finance Council to discuss the merger of assets. If Bishop Deeley accepts the recommendations of these advisory groups, he will then make known to the parishioners his decision by means of a public decree.

This past week, the Diocese of Portland relaunched the "Joy of the Family" initiative. We recognize the struggles our families are facing during this time of upheaval in our lives. To help families as they journey through this time of pandemic, the Diocese will present prayers and meditations from the pastoral document by Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), which is a celebration of the gift and vocation of marriage and family life. It is another way to stay connected as one family in Christ. You will find these resources on our website at www.cluster22.org.

Many significant life events happen during the season of spring. This year, we are hearing the sadness from many graduating seniors that they won't be able to mark their completion of High School years in the same way so many others have. Traditionally, our parishes have offered a graduation Mass in June. This year, we will be blessing our graduates in our videotaped Mass on June 14th. If you are a graduating senior, please contact Michelle Valcourt at michelle.valcourt@portlanddiocese.org so we can stay in touch with you and support you as you go on to the next phase of your journey. Please keep all of our graduating seniors in your prayers.

Thank you for your ongoing financial and prayerful support of our parishes. Be assured of my prayer support and I ask that you pray for me and all our staff who continue to serve on your behalf.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul F. Stefanko". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and legible.

Msgr. Paul F. Stefanko