



Saint Augustine of Canterbury Roman Catholic Church

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August 22, 2021

Feast of the Queenship of Mary
Patroness of the Diocese of Metuchen

Dear Parishioners of Saint Augustine,
My brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today throughout the Church of Metuchen we celebrated our patronal feast, gifted to us by Saint John Paul II, when we were created on November 19, 1981 from the Diocese of Trenton. Today at the 12noon Mass, Jonathan Abouhayla received a special blessing as he prepares to leave for the Diocese of LaCrosse in Wisconsin for a spirituality year in preparation, God willing, to enter the seminary next year. Today is also the one year anniversary of Father Tom Lanza's ordination to the priesthood and the celebration of his First Mass! We are mindful of the gift of the priesthood of Father Edmund Luciano to the Church of Metuchen, also a parishioner of Saint Augustine! Please keep Jonathan in your prayers as he begins this new chapter in his life as we continue to pray for Father Edmund and Father Tom.

On August 5th, Sister Natasha Roig, FMA made her first vows as a Salesian Sister and now she is ministering at one of their schools in Louisiana. We also celebrate the Religious vocations of Filippini Sister Barbara O'Kane, and Sister of Christian Charity Celice Marie Gonzales! God has definitely blessed our parish with young men and women who embrace the call to serve the Church as a priest or religious!

On August 17th, the parish offered a Mass for our second pastor, Monsignor William Capano on the anniversary of his death in 1995. Two weeks later after his death, Bishop Hughes called me to become your pastor, and I was appointed officially on October 10, 1995. I am beginning my 26th year as your pastor, which is hard for me to fathom! God has gifted me with this parish and know I am blessed to be your pastor and I ask for your continued prayers.

Our lives drastically changed in March 2020 with the pandemic and the State of New Jersey going into shut down mode. Most of the dioceses of New Jersey literally locked the doors of their Churches until June 2020 when the Governor allowed us to celebrate public Mass once again, but with severe restrictions. Thanks be to God, Bishop Checchio did not close our Churches and Saint Augustine was open daily for parishioners to stop in to pray before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament – *what a blessing that was!*

Now that the restrictions have been lifted and we are able to celebrate Mass as before; however, I realize some parishioners, for various reasons, are still hesitant to attend Mass. On the Feast of Corpus Christi in June 2021 the Bishops of New Jersey voted to remove the dispensation for attending Mass due to the pandemic and now Catholics are encouraged to return to Mass and the

gift of receiving Jesus in Holy Communion. While many parishes eliminated some Sunday Masses during the pandemic, our parish maintained our regular Mass schedule.

In March 2020 when Masses couldn't be celebrated, I wrote to you asking for your continued financial support during those challenging days to help us meet our weekly and monthly expenses. As always, the parishioners of Saint Augustine came through, and I can remember opening the parish center door and seeing the floor covered with Church offertory envelopes! This practice continued for months until we started celebrating Mass. Parishioners mailed in their envelopes and also dropped them in the "candle donation pillar" in the gathering area. I thank you for your continued support during the early days of the pandemic and our present situation. We are not out of the woods yet with the new strands of the virus, which again creates anxiety. I have noticed, while masks in the Church are optional throughout New Jersey, many parishioners are returning to the practice of wearing a mask at Mass. Bishop Checchio has asked the priests, deacons and Eucharistic Ministers during this time of uncertainty to once again wear a mask when giving out communion. ***Please know that every Friday our Church is electrostatically cleaned to kill any viruses.***

On Easter Thursday 2021, I received my second Moderna vaccine at Saint Peter's University Hospital. As Pope Francis stated it is **an act of love** to receive the vaccine. The FDA has given full **approval to the Pfizer vaccine** which is great news! All children 12 years and older can receive the Pfizer vaccine. "As and act of love," I encourage everyone that qualifies to get vaccinated and it saddens me to see the hospitals are once again becoming overwhelmed by Covid patients and the majority of them are **not vaccinated**.

While the demographics of our parish are changing and parishioners are moving out of the state because of taxes, please allow me to share some information regarding the financial status of the parish. The fiscal year report for July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, which will be submitted to the Diocese, is being prepared and a Summary Report will be included in the bulletin in the fall as is our custom.

Sunday Collections

Fiscal year 2018-2019	\$1,159,384.27
Fiscal year 2019-2020	\$1,053,514.44 – March 2020 pandemic – no Mass until June 2020
Fiscal year 2020-2021	\$1,048,114.10 – pandemic continues and Church attendance down

Fiscal year Sunday collections

July 1 – August 22 (7 Sunday collections)

July 1, 2020 – August 22, 2020	\$138,630.41	Average collection \$19,804.34
July 1, 2021 – August 22, 2021	\$131,752.99	Average collection \$18,821.86
Fiscal Year 2019-2020		Average collection \$21,070
Fiscal Year 2020-2021		Average collection \$20,551

Once again I am asking all parishioners, according to your means, to continue to support your parish during these challenging days to help us meet our expenses. **At this time we will not resume taking up the collection at Mass. Here are some ways for you to help your parish:**

***when you come to Mass use the baskets in the gathering area to place your Church offertory envelope as well as any second collection envelopes*

***the Church is open for the 9am daily Mass until 3pm so you can make a visit to the Church and place your Church offertory envelope, as well as any special collections, in the “**candle donation pillar**” located in the gathering area by the memorial wall*

***we shared this past weekend that the Mission Cooperative Collection (August 7/8) for the Little Sisters of the Poor/St. Joseph Home for the Elderly, Totowa, received \$13,398 from the special envelope which was included in your offertory envelope – thank you for your generosity for this special cause!*

***mail in your envelopes weekly/monthly*

***have your bank send us weekly/monthly check automatically from your checking account made out to Saint Augustine Church with your envelope number on the check to get proper credit – at this time several individuals and families are doing this*

Thank you for giving the above some consideration to help support your parish financially, **and know it is greatly appreciated!**

Saint Augustine School

Back in March 2020 the school went immediately virtual and this is due to the leadership of Sister Mary Louise Shulas, MPF, our Principal, who started preparing the teachers in early January 2020 to prepare for this moment during the pandemic. The teachers and staff truly embraced the challenges to make sure the academic year was completed with no major problems. Unfortunately we could not have an in person graduation June 2020, but through Tony DeBari, our tech staff member, and the creativity of many, the drive by graduation with the receiving of their diplomas individually with their parents in the gathering area was a wonderful “*historic celebration.*” I am grateful to the 2020 graduates and their families for “*flowing with it.*” I am grateful to all the families who continued to meet their tuition obligations during those dark days of the pandemic!

The 2020-2021 academic year was “**in class education**” which at the beginning was 60% in class and 40% virtual. Each quarter more and more students were coming back to the classroom and by the end of the 2020-2021 year we were at 90% students back in the classroom. Our school met the challenges of dealing with the pandemic and Saint Augustine school **did not close down for one day from any outbreaks of the virus – Praise God!**

The 2021-2022 academic year will **be in classroom education** and as per the Diocese there will be no virtual education. I pray those students who are 12 years old and older will get the

vaccine. Many parishioners who come to Mass who are 12 and older have shared with me **that they have been vaccinated.**

I am happy to share that the registrations for the 2021-2022 academic year have increased from our Pre K3/ PreK4 and throughout the elementary and middle school grades. There are many schools throughout the Diocese who have gone down to one class per grade, but Saint Augustine School continues to be strong academically, spiritually, and financially! While I was hoping personally that the students would be returning back to the classrooms without their masks, due to the present situation, unfortunately the students will be wearing a mask. Sister Mary Louise, the staff and faculty are getting everything ready to welcome the students back to Saint Augustine **“in person!”**

I am proud to state that Saint Augustine of Canterbury School continues to be a beacon of excellence in Catholic education in the Diocese of Metuchen and I know our former pastors, Father Reilly and Msgr. Capano are looking down from heaven and are well pleased!

I was hoping to have a special Mass of Thanksgiving for **the Gift of Saint Augustine Parish** on Sunday, October 17th at the 12noon Mass followed by a parish luncheon. It's been almost two years that we gathered as a community of faith to share fellowship, which pains me. However, due to the various variants of the virus, I do not think it is appropriate at this time to host a reception. Saint Augustine is known throughout the Diocese for throwing great parties so I am looking forward to the near future to host a wonderful luncheon in the spirit of “Father Reilly”!

On Sunday, August 22nd, the Feast of the Queenship of Mary, in the Gospel Jesus asked the twelve Apostles, “will you leave Me too?” and Peter responded, “Lord to whom shall we go You have the words of eternal life.” At this time in history while many have left the Church for various reasons, and during the almost two years of the pandemic, these must be our words too, **“Lord to whom shall we go You have the words of eternal life!”** During these challenging days I invite each and every one of you to embrace your call to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and reach out to your family, neighbors, and friends to embrace the gift of their Catholic Faith! As Saint John Paul II and Jesus Christ throughout the Gospels said, **“DO NOT BE AFRAID!”**

We have a saying here at the parish: **“There’s no place like Saint A’s.”** I cannot tell you how many letters I receive from parishioners who have moved and write to me and share how they miss “Saint A’s.” Those words are a grace for me as your pastor, which is God speaking to me! Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and I look forward to seeing you in Church – physically – as one parishioner a couple of months ago came back to Church after almost a year and a half because of the pandemic, came to me and said, **“I need a hug from you – it’s good to be back!”** - and this parishioner has been back every week since! I remain,

In the Peace and Love of Christ,



Reverend Canon Robert G. Lynam, KCHS
Pastor

CANON OF
SAINT FLORIAN BASILICA

