

# ST. JOSEPH PARISH AND SCHOOL – JANUARY 31, 2021

## Dear Parents and Parishioners,

Almost everyone from the political realm even to the spiritual realm recognizes a disjointed and fractured people. This is made even more intense by the health epidemic. Stress related problems including even death are on the increase. I find this a fact that summons us to approach God with great humility and humble prayer.

Bishop David Bonnar, our new Bishop of the Youngstown Diocese, has emphasized to the priests this critical need for conversations with the Lord, which we call prayer. He has chosen for his prayerful motto and agenda, “That they all may be one.” He then made it clear that unity does not mean uniformity.

The primary unit in society is clearly the family. The family made up of husband, wife, and children are not uniform but they certainly strive for unity. People who live together and work together must frequently reflect that more joins them together than what divides them. That is prayer.

Bishop Bonnar met this week with all his priests. He set his personal agenda for guidance of the Diocese. He placed it in three words: **Listen, Learn, and Love**. “I want to love all of my priests and people and this will come from listening to you and learning from you. I pray for you.”

The Bishop then made a request of all his priests. It also was in three words: **Pray, Patience, and Trust**. Our Bishop constantly expresses the need for prayer because God can guide us beyond our dreams and hopes. Without God our very existence is in peril. He asks for patience as we pursue an agenda of growth. In this agenda toward growth he asks for trust. We need to have trust in God, trust in our Bishop, and trust in one another.

Pray! The ultimate prayer for Catholic people is the Eucharist. **Our unifying belief is that the living physical resurrected presence of Jesus comes within us with the reception of Communion.** Parishioners, families, and children are united by the one bread which is Jesus himself.

We are a diverse people but receive the same Sacrament. It does not matter how we receive it, in our hands, on our tongue, or only by the Precious Blood as health requires.

It does not matter if we are great sinners or close to sainthood or somewhere in between. It does not matter if we are a people of limited faith or great faith; it does not matter if we are depressed or elated, or in between; it only matters that we believe that this is our Lord and our God.

“The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.” (Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*, #47).

Despite our unworthiness, Jesus comes under our roof. May this type of unity be the ultimate vaccination in our life today. Christ protects and heals all who receive him.

Fr. Tom Acker, S.J.  
January 31, 2021