

THE PHILADELPHIA ORDINARIATE POST

A NEWSLETTER OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC CHURCH
THE PERSONAL ORDINARIATE OF THE CHAIR OF SAINT PETER IN THE PHILADELPHIA AREA

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Dear Parishioners and Friends,

As we know from our time of Eucharistic abstinence when we came into the communion of the Catholic Church, the Church does not practice “open” communion. Only those who have received the Baptism, Confession and Confirmation in the Catholic Church are normally allowed to receive Communion. This practice differs from some other churches, including the Episcopal Church (though ECUSA did not have open communion when I was ordained). And it can provoke negative reactions from non-Catholics: “I’m a perfectly good Christian; why can’t I receive Communion when I come to your church?”



Since this question comes up frequently, I want to say a few things here, and to have a more detailed discussion at the adult forum during coffee hour on Septuagesima, February 12th. In the Catholic understanding, Communion presupposes commitment to the teaching and discipline of the Catholic Church. This is an act of will as well as intellect. While the commitment is no doubt nourished by Communion, there must be a basic commitment before receiving Communion. This makes sense on several levels.

Firstly, one must be committed to the Church’s understanding of what Communion is if one is to receive It with integrity. The Church has the responsibility of defining what happens (the bread and wine are transformed into Christ’s Body and Blood at the hands of the priest). This is not something for the individual to decide for himself. To receive, then, requires that one accept what the Church teaches. Otherwise one is in the untenable position of saying, “I can do this on my own terms.” One does not accept an invitation to dinner only to arrive and insist on altering the menu and guest list.

Secondly, Communion involves peril as well as blessing: he who eats unworthily risks damnation (see I Cor 11:29). In order to receive the blessing and not the damnation requires that we heed the Church’s teaching about worthy reception, which includes having received the (Catholic) sacraments of initiation and being in a state of grace. The Church is solicitous for the well-being of all men, and thus tells us what is needed for us to receive Communion safely.

Thirdly, Communion is an act of supreme intimacy with Christ. Intimacy is appropriate only within certain relations: a man is completely intimate only with his wife, e.g. It is not just that we are vulnerable to Jesus when we receive Him: He has made Himself vulnerable to us as well, and we want to honor that by our care in how we treat Him. Reverence for this wondrous intimacy is a key reason for our Communion discipline.

Fourthly, Communion with Christ implies Communion with His Body, on earth as well as in heaven. This means that we reasonably expect all those who make their Communion with us to have made the same commitments we have to Christ in the Church. We need to be assured that we can depend upon one another, in order to share the blessings (and not the perils) of the Communion we receive together. Communion is a corporate act as well as a personal one, and the corporate nature of it demands a shared commitment and understanding of the act.

That we are in a Church which has a clear and concrete understanding of Communion also affects us when we attend services in churches which have a different understanding – which includes those with open communion. The fact that it is open is already evidence that their understanding of what is going on is different from the Catholic one. In such a situation, we might not offend against the other’s discipline by receiving communion, but we would offend against our own. Moreover, we would make a bad witness to the Catholic faith if we received communion there, as our action would testify that there is no difference between this communion and the Catholic. At the same time, we must be sensitive to the fact that some non-Catholics take offense at the Catholic understanding of Communion – as there are those who take offense at the Catholic

teaching on abortion. If we encounter such, we need to be gentle and charitable as well as clear in our defense of the Catholic faith.

Building Fund

We now have a tentative agreement with Sacred Heart for the purchase of the property. The agreement needs approval by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and by the Ordinariate. It is a favorable deal, along the lines we expected when we first came to Bridgeport. I will set up a meeting of the congregation to share the details once I have received the approvals.

Our basic approach so far has been to fund capital building projects, whether repair or improvements, from the Building Fund which we started a little over a year ago. We would like to continue that. We plan to fund maintenance, utilities and the mortgage from the operating budget, but capital projects from the Building Fund. There are a number of improvements which are on our "wants list." Among our top priorities are these. We want to reconfigure the choir loft to allow for moving the organ and choir to the loft from the back of the church. The floor of the loft currently as floor tile, which may or may not contain asbestos. We are having it tested before proceeding. When that is resolved, we'll have a carpenter redo the steps and risers so that the console of the organ can be placed at the bottom of the loft. This will help us both short-term, for the choir and current organ, and also for the pipe organ we hope to have eventually. Another project is relighting the church. In the nave, the task lighting for hymnals, etc., could be improved, as could the lighting on the stations and paintings. The sanctuary and altar are even more in need of better lighting. Since both projects would enhance our worship, they are at the top of the list. Likewise, we are still pursuing the side altarpieces from St Madeleine Sophie, to replace the statues currently on our side altars. We are currently waiting for a clear idea of costs. Also on the list is improved accessibility for the school building.

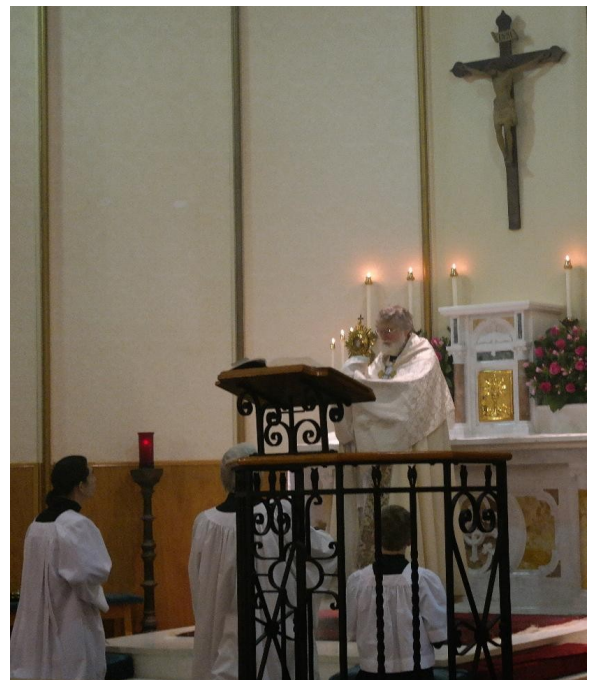
There are also the two repair costs which we'd like to fund from the Building Fund, which I wrote about last month. Our tentative agreement with Sacred Heart has us funding the needed work on the underground oil tanks and the crack in the tower wall, in return for a considerable reduction in the purchase price. I think this a reasonable accommodation for both parishes, though it does mean we need to pay for the repairs now.

With all this in mind, I would ask you all to consider making a special contribution to the Building Fund now. I would not want you to reduce your giving to the operating budget of the parish in order to give to the Building Fund. But there may well be those among you who are moved to make a special donation to the Building Fund, over and above your regular pledge. At the moment, we do not have the funds in the Building Fund to move ahead with all the things we would like to do – the choir loft, relighting (at least of the sanctuary), the altarpieces, and parish house accessibility, in addition to the two major repair items. I hope that will appeal to your generosity! A substantial response to this request will yield very visible results – sooner rather than later. Checks should be made payable to St John's, and marked Building Fund. Thanks!

Lent

Ash Wednesday is March 1st, so you will not get another *POP* before Lent starts. A few things to note:

- Fasting. Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are strict fasts: one meal, taken at suppertime. Two collations (a small amount of food) are permissible earlier in the day, though together they should be less than a regular meal. This fast is obligatory for all those between the ages of 18 and 60, and is expected for everyone else whose health and labor permit. The Fridays of Lent are days of obligatory abstinence from meat. (The other Fridays of the year are days of abstinence for the Ordinariate, excepting the Fridays between Christmas and Epiphany and those in Paschaltide.) The other weekdays of Lent are fast days, when we should eat less. We have discretion on these days about how to define the rule: two meals instead of three, for example, or eliminating snacks, sweets, seconds, alcohol. Fasting is an ancient and fruitful discipline, teaching us to subject the desires of the flesh to the spirit, and also teaching us humility in our need for God.
- Ash Wednesday Masses will be at 10 and 6:30.
- We will again offer Stations of the Cross and Benediction on the Fridays in Lent, beginning March 3rd. The service will be at 7:30, preceded by a simple soup supper at 6 in the parish hall (meatless, of course). There will be a sign up for those who can bring soup for us one week in Lent.
- Lent is a penitential season, when we will all wish to make a sacramental confession (or two or three). In addition to my usual Sunday time for confessions (9-9:45 in the lower church), I will also be available on Thursday evenings after Mass (until at least 7) in the confessional for your convenience.



- The Lenten Quiet Day is scheduled for Ember Saturday in Lent, March 11th, 9-2.

February

Septuagesima is February 12th. The Pre-Lenten season gives us warning that Lent is at hand, and allows us to carefully consider what we should take on or give up for Lent. Sunday, February 19th, which would be Sexagesima, is supplanted this year by the Solemnity of the Chair of Saint Peter. This is the feast of title for the Ordinariate, and is observed as a solemnity on that day throughout the Ordinariate. Quinquagesima (February 26th) is the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday. The plan is for pancakes for breakfast after Mass that day. Given that many of our folk come from a distance, having a separate Shrove Tuesday pancake supper is a stretch – with Ash Wednesday and the Friday Stations also that week. So we'll do the pancakes on Sunday.

Also on Quinquagesima is the monthly assembling of the breakfast bags for Aid for Friends. Items can be brought in any time and put in the green storage bin in the coffee hour room. Each bag contains 4-5 non-perishable items. Suggested items are: mini cereal boxes, juice cartons, oatmeal packets, cereal/granola bars, tea bags, instant coffee, hot cocoa, boxes of raisins, nuts, candy, pudding/fruit cups, peanut butter cracker packs, Ramen noodles. Note: Please do **not** donate items requiring a microwave to prepare, fresh fruit, fruit cups with thin aluminum foil tops, or muffins, pop-tarts, TastyKakes, chips, etc. Please see Gina Royce with any questions.

The monthly cleaning day is February 11th, beginning after the 9 a.m. Mass. The following day we will be baptizing Felicity Pauline Bako, the newest member of our parish. I will be on retreat February 13th-17th. There will be no weekday Masses those days (resuming on Saturday, the 18th), nor will the Wednesday Bible study meet.

I want to thank all who helped with Evensong & Benediction on the 3rd, especially Bill Gatens and the choir. They were in fine form, and we had many visitors. I think we offered them a creditable introduction to the Anglican Patrimony within the communion of the Catholic Church. Many also stayed for the reception. Thanks to those who contributed to the reception as well.

Yours faithfully,

Fr David Ousley