

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,

In His resurrected body, Jesus didn't really "belong" on earth. During that forty days between Easter and Ascension, He has certain things to accomplish – opening the disciples' minds to understand Scripture, choosing some of them to be witnesses of His resurrection by appearing to them, ordaining the apostles with the power to forgive, preach and baptize, forgiving Peter and commissioning him to feed the sheep. At his Ascension, He is enthroned at the right hand of the Father. Being "seated", as we say in the Creed, is the sign that He is at rest, His work of redemption on earth completed: as He said on the Cross, "It is finished."

Yet in charging the apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations and baptize them, He also says "I am with you always, even unto the end of the ages." (Matthew 28:20) While His bodily presence is in heaven, He is at the same time still with us. Our small minds sometimes have trouble with this. We rightly worship Him as enthroned in heaven. But we must not conclude from that that he is absent from us here and now. He has made it clear that He wishes the greatest possible intimacy with us in our earthly sojourn: He dwells in us and we in Him; the branches die without an organic connection to the vine; we are to abide in him by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. He wants to be as close to us as life itself.

This is the reality which should form our Christian lives. We should not think that being Christian is to check off the Catholic to-do list: Mass on Sunday, abstinence on Friday (except in Paschaltide), avoiding sin, confession once in a while, not swearing or kicking the dog. These are all important, but not the center. Rather it is living with Jesus, our Beloved. He is our life: anytime we "live" apart from Him is not really life at all. A running dialogue with Him during the day is not out of order. Receiving Holy Communion should bring a special closeness to Him, at least on occasion. Likewise the sacrament of Penance. When we can let go of our worldly preoccupations, our prayer becomes time to be close to the Beloved. The point is that we want to be living with Jesus, not just as His employees or subcontractors, but as His spouse, His beloved. He gives us many ways to foster that love: prayer, sacraments, Scripture, virtue, works of mercy. We do these, however, not to make points or feel good about ourselves, but because we love Christ and want to love Him more and more purely. All for the love of Jesus.

Master Plan

Knowing that our buildings present some serious usability issues, we commissioned a Master Plan for the property from the church architectural firm of Cram & Ferguson. These are the architects who designed what is now our Cathedral in Houston, along with many other great church buildings over the years. Feel free to take a look at their [web site](#). The Master Plan is nearing completion, and will be presented to the congregation at a meeting after Mass on Pentecost, May 20th. I hope that all parishioners will make every effort to be present, to look and listen and ask questions. It is vital that everyone understand what is being proposed.

Before commissioning the Plan, we identified a number of issues to be addressed: at this point only the nave level of the church is wheel-chair accessible – no floor of the parish house is nor the lower church. We lack a good space for coffee hour, and for larger meetings. The back parking lot is not convenient for either parish house or church. The church itself needs better lighting, and could use a more "Anglican" feel for our liturgy. We lack a usable outdoor space for kids' play or for summer coffee hour. The church tower is squat, and there are long-standing cracks in some of the interior walls. These are some of the issues we have identified. It seemed prudent to look at them together, with the help of an expert, rather than trying to address them piecemeal.

From what I have seen of the drafts so far, I think you will find the Plan presents some creative solutions to our building problems. It is important for you to understand what happens after the 20th. On the 20th, Ethan Anthony, the Principal of Cram & Ferguson, tells us about the Plan, and answers questions. Then we will all need to take some time to reflect on the Plan. I anticipate some on-going discussions, both formal and informal. In particular, in our reflections, we will need to discern whether the Plan will help or hinder our mission. For your convenience, here is the mission statement for the parish: "*Our mission is to know Christ; to spread His Gospel; to serve Him in His people; to pray with Him and labor with Him that His Church may be One; and to worship God in the Anglican Tradition in the communion of the Catholic Church.*" There are

various conclusions we might come to: that we don't really like the Plan; that while it is good, it is not compelling; that while the Plan is good thing, it would distract us from our mission at this point, rather than fostering and enhancing our mission. Or we might conclude that our mission needs the changes to the buildings. As always, our thinking and discernment needs to be mission oriented.

If we are to go ahead and implement the Plan, we will need the enthusiastic support of the whole congregation. Major changes such as these do not come cheap. Going ahead will entail a capital funds drive, and will be dependent on our raising the money to do it.

So here are the steps which lie ahead. First, Ethan Anthony, visits us on Pentecost to present the plan. Then there will be a period early in the summer for us to discuss and reflect on the costs and benefits of the Plan in light of our understanding of the mission of the parish. In due course, we come to a consensus about whether we should proceed with it or not at this time. If we decide to go ahead, then we will begin the process of a capital funds drive to see if we can raise the money to do it. Only if that is successful will we go ahead.

I should note that there is also another capital expense on the horizon: the organ. The pipe organ which was here when we arrived is small and inadequate for our musical needs. We are using an electronic instrument, on loan from Kevin Chun, while we develop plans for a suitable replacement. This has proven more complicated than anticipated, and it is not clear at this point what the best solution will be. There are technical issues to be resolved, including the location for the pipes. In order to maintain our already excellent music program, we will need an instrument of reasonable size and excellent tonal quality. However we resolve the technical issues, this will be a significant expense. I'm extremely grateful to a couple of parishioners who have already offered (at their own initiative) to contribute to the costs when the time comes.

Coming Events

Coming immediately: the parish dinner at Peppers in King of Prussia on Friday, May 4th (you should have already signed up), and the spring work day at SJB on Saturday, May 5th, beginning with Mass at 9, and ending around noon. No need to sign up: just come!

Also coming up is the monthly Patricians adult discussion group on May 23rd, 6:30-8:30. This month's topic is *What Catholics believe about Mary*. This is a *discussion* group: there is a brief presentation by one of the members at the beginning, and then the floor is open. Questions are encouraged as well as observations. It is sponsored by the Legion of Mary. Please come, and bring a friend. Refreshments will be served and free literature will be available.

On May 31st, Deacon Aaron Bayles is to be ordained to the priesthood at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Walsingham by Bishop Lopes. Many of you know him from his days as a curate at the Church of the Good Shepherd. As a priest, he will continue his work as a chaplain in the Air Force Reserve, and begin to shepherd an Ordinariate community in formation in southern California.

Ascension Day is Thursday, May 10th, and is an Holy Day of Obligation, when Catholics are obligated to assist at the offering of the Mass. At St John's, there will be a low Mass at 10 a.m., and a Sung Mass at 6:30 p.m. Your local parish will also have Masses should these be impossible for you.

Pentecost, the third greatest feast of the Church year is on May 20th. Mass as usual is at 10 a.m. That is also the occasion for the Nelsons to be received into the communion of the Church, and the day of the congregational meeting to present the Master Plan.

Our Bishop, the Most Reverend Steven J. Lopes, will be making a visit to the parish on Corpus Christi, Sunday, June 3rd. This is one of his regular visits to the parish, and he will also be confirming a couple of our young people. Be sure it is on your calendar.

The Bridgeport Knights of Columbus will be hosting a second Bingo Night in the parish house on Friday, May 18th, to which you are all invited. The Knights' aim is a fun night, even more than gambling. Their first bingo night in April was successful – both for fun, and for fund-raising. Food and prizes, with the grand prize of \$100. Entry is \$25, or a discounted \$20 if you register at the Thrift Shop ahead of time. Doors open at 6; Bingo is 7-9.

Thanks

I want to thank this month:

- Charmaine Forden and Carol Desandro for taking the time to visit some of our parish shut-ins.
- Roger Converse for helping to get the parish sacramental registers up to date.
- Therese Rawson for arranging altar flowers when Beth was away.
- Leslie Altena for continuing to organize regular cleaning.
- Mark Johnson for organizing the spring work day.

Thanks!

Yours faithfully,
Fr David Ousley