

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 the Middle ages, the Church instituted the feast of Corpus Christi after Trinity Sunday. The Church sensed the need for a separate celebration of this gift apart from Maundy Thursday. The Eucharist is both central to our worship, being our Lord's appointed form of worship, and a challenge to our understanding.

"This is my Body." He does not say, "This is like my Body," or "This is a symbol of my Body." "This is my Body." How can this be? His resurrected body is in heaven. His body which is the Church is in the world, and in purgatory and in heaven. How can His body also be on the altar? And, more, how can we eat it? Yet this is what He taught, and what the Church has believed from the beginning. In the second century, St Justin and the other apologists for the faith defended Christians against the charge of cannibalism – because their realistic language about Christ's presence in the Eucharist had been misunderstood.

The bread becomes His Body, the wine His Blood. We receive the externals of bread and wine and the substance of Body and Blood. We experience this truth, even if it is beyond our understanding: we know He is present. Jesus, in His love for us, wanting to be always with us, desiring that we share in the fruits of His passion and resurrection, has so ordered it. It is more with the heart than with the mind that we grasp the Reality. It is with the heart that we accept the love of our sacrificial Lord. So even if the mind stumbles at the concept, faith embraces the truth, and love receives the ever-loving Lord Christ.

Bishop Lopes' Visit

Bishop Lopes' visit to us was significant on several counts. As it is whenever he is with us, we have our tangible connection with the Catholic Church. Parish and priest live within the Church through the Bishop and diocese (in our case, Ordinariate, which is functionally a diocese). Branches in the Vine. While the parish is part of the whole church, it is also the case that the wholeness of the church is present in each parish, just as the wholeness is present in each diocese and bishop. We have found joy and peace in the Catholic Church (often along with some petty irritations on occasion). Bishop Lopes, as Bishop of the Ordinariate, is our organic connection to the whole.

His visit also marks another milestone in the development of St John the Baptist. This was our first confirmation by Bishop Lopes. Background: normally, only the bishop confirms those baptized as infants in the Catholic Church. Priests are delegated to confirm those baptized outside the Catholic Church when they are received into the communion of the Church. Most of our young people were thus confirmed when they were received, even if they were below the usual age for confirmation. Since (as you remember from your catechesis) confirmation confers an indelible character and is thus unrepeatable, these are not confirmed again when they come of age. So the confirmation of Elio and Susanna (or perhaps I should say, Francesco and Philomena, their chosen confirmation names) shows that we have young people growing up in the parish and not just coming in from without. We wish Francesco and Philomena every blessing as they continue to grow in the faith. ("The bishop lays hands on the throng/ Of candidates kneeling along,/ As a visible sign/ That the Spirit Divine/ Is come to make holy and strong." – *Catholic Rhymes for Christian Children* by G.L.P., 1923)

The Solemn Pontifical Mass was also the first time we have done a Solemn Mass, with deacon and sub-deacon. I trust this will become more common when Roger Converse is ordained and we have a resident deacon. Our thanks go to Deacon Chris Roberts of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for coming to help us, and for his effort in learning the peculiarities of Divine Worship.

After Mass, the Bishop met with the Pastoral & Finance Councils. A discussion of the master plan occupied much of the meeting. I want to share a couple of the points which he made to the Councils. In considering improvements to the buildings, the Bishop noted (I am paraphrasing) that there should be integrity between our buildings and our mission: the proposed spire is a symbol of our connection with the Bridgeport community. A particularly large one might look good, but also runs the risk of boasting of something that we have failed to achieve, and thus lack integrity. Likewise building changes should be governed by the needs and fruits of mission. We must make sure that our efforts in outreach and ministry are as robust as the sacramental representation of the architecture. Yes, announce that "We are here," but also, "Be here."

He also made the point that outreach is part of our patrimony. In a typical Anglo-Catholic parish, perhaps half of the parishioners might be involved in some sort of outreach, while the number in a Roman Catholic parish might be less than 10%. Our mission and outreach, as an expected part of parish life for everyone, is a gift for us to share with the larger church, no less than our liturgy and music. This is a good reminder. On the one hand, we remember that we should all be involved one way or another in our outreach and mission (and as the Bishop noted, outreach and service entail evangelism, since the greatest gift we can give to others is Christ). On the other hand, evangelization is not an optional add-on for us in the Ordinariate: it is part of our essential identity. Too often, I fear, we think of evangelization, service, outreach, etc., as nice things but not essential, like prayer and worship. Prayer and worship *are* essential, but if done honestly, lead to the desire to share the riches of Christ with others. Everyone should be thinking about ways to reach out, both to our neighbors in Bridgeport and to those in need of the Catholic faith. This is a work of Christian discipleship, and all who would be Christ's disciples will want to have a part.

Master Plan

Ethan Anthony of Cram & Ferguson ably presented the Master Plan for the property to the congregation last month. Copies of the basic plans are available and have also been posted in the coffee hour room, and I hope you are contemplating what you have seen. As I said previously, the first question is whether we like the plan, whether we think it is good and will improve our use of the buildings, whether it will make our life here better. The second question is whether the changes will enhance our mission. Both questions will need to be answered in the affirmative before we proceed any further. To help with the second question, our mission statement is also posted in the coffee hour room. *"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."*

What happens next? The Pastoral Council will discuss the plan at our meeting next Sunday. I would also invite everyone in the congregation to a general meeting to discuss the plan on our Feast of Title, the nativity of Saint John the Baptist, June 24th. These are decisions which involve all of us, and it is important that we listen to one another, and, by God's grace, all end up on the same page. Discernment of God's will in such matters involving our common life requires the efforts of all of us. So please be praying and reflecting. And plan to join us for our discussion on the 24th during coffee.

Sons of the Parish

When he was here, Bishop Lopes mentioned several sons of SJB who are entering holy orders in the Ordinariate. In addition to Matthew Hummel, who is in formation for priesthood, and Roger Converse, who is beginning his preparation for the permanent diaconate, Bishop Lopes mentioned Aaron Bayles and Jonathan Mitchican. Father Bayles was ordained to the priesthood on the Feast of the Visitation (last week), and was at one time curate at the Church of the Good Shepherd. Deacon Mitchican is to be ordained a priest on August 22nd at the cathedral in Houston. He was received into the communion of the Catholic Church and confirmed here at St John's last summer. You probably missed the event, since it occurred on a weeknight, following his last Sunday as an Episcopal parish priest in Drexel Hill. The next day he left for Houston, where he began work as a chaplain at a Catholic high school. That work will begin for real when he is ordained a priest. Of course Good Shepherd has also produced a number of Catholic priests over the years, including Frs Rutler, Steenson, Scharbach, and Soule. A video of Fr Bayles' ordination is available on the Ordinariate [web site](#). I hope that we will raise up many more priests and deacons from among the sons of the parish in the days and years to come.

Coming Events

Our Patricians adult discussion group was the subject of a nice column on the Catholic Philly email/web site. [Link](#) I'm grateful to Steve and Edel Lukens (now officially members of the Ordinariate and parishioners at SJB) for organizing this. Its purpose is to help Catholics understand the faith, and to be comfortable articulating it. The next monthly meeting is on June 27th, 6:30 p.m. in the parish hall. The topic is a timely one: the truth about marriage. You are all welcome to join in.

The Bridgeport Knights of Columbus will be hosting a third Bingo Night in the parish house on Friday, June 29th, to which you are all invited. The Knights' aim is a fun night, even more than gambling. There is 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:

- Leslie Altena, Raynor Sherlock, Wendy Ewing, Pat Lincoln, Chris Jordan, the Finegans, and Beth for cleaning before the Bishop's visit.
- Bell Anderson (with help from her friends!) for providing the reception for the Bishop.

Thanks!

Yours faithfully,
Fr David Ousley