

# 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

[WWW.SJBRIDGEPORT.ORG](http://WWW.SJBRIDGEPORT.ORG)

502 FORD STREET, BRIDGEPORT, PENNSYLVANIA 19405

215-247-1092

---

July, 2018

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

Last Sunday we celebrated the birth of St John the Baptist, our parish patron. While St Gabriel told Zachariah, his father, that he would be filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth, and even in the womb he testified to the presence of Christ when the Blessed Virgin visited his mother, John nevertheless spent years in the wilderness before he began his public ministry. This was his time of spiritual formation, probably at least 15-25 years: a long time. And it was spent in the desert, away from distractions, but also away from home and hearth, creature comforts (locusts no doubt taste better with wild honey, but they are still locusts), human companionship, days off and vacations – all the things we take for granted. He had time for prayer, and it is safe to assume, for temptation.

Scripture tells us that he spent the years in the wilderness, but does not explain why it is necessary. We can, however, guess. His unique ministry of preaching the baptism of repentance and conversion in preparation for the coming of the Messiah requires extensive formation. Self must be mortified. He must be ready to devote everything he has and is to the special mission God has given him. The residue of the old man must be purged. He must be wholly faithful to God's direction. Otherwise he might try to direct his mission according to his own judgment about what would work best, and thus speak at the wrong time or in the wrong way. He might alter his message to avoid offending people (scribes, Pharisees, Herod). He might shy away from warning them of coming damnation in order to win friends and influence people.

In the desert, he certainly learned to be God's willing instrument, to be a prophet and more than a prophet, as Jesus later testified. He must have learned patience, as his training went on day after day for years. He learned to trust God, for the food and water to sustain life, and for everything else. He learned to prize God's will above all else. While our spiritual formation takes a different form (no locusts required – for which we should be grateful!), we still need the formation. For us it is more commonly the discipline of family obligations (spouse, children, parents), the requirements of our work and station in life, the disciplines of prayer and sacraments, and perhaps the occasional retreat. We need to learn the same things John learned: to prize God's will above our own, to be patient, and to trust Him for everything. We are given the Holy Spirit in baptism, and this is confirmed in confirmation and nourished in every Holy Communion – yet we still need the ascetic formation. Let us seek Saint John's intercession, even as we also pray that God will "make us so to follow his doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching; and after his example constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake."

## **Master Plan**

Last Sunday's congregational discussion about the master plan for the property suggested that while a few people have concerns (timing, cost, e.g.), most folk seem ready to move ahead to see if we can raise the money to proceed. Most of the discussion focused on the relation between the parish's mission and the proposed alterations to the buildings, which is good. Mission should dictate buildings. It became clear that there are two aspects to our mission. On the one hand, since we are now located in Bridgeport, we have an obligation (and opportunity) to serve the community. On the other hand, as an Ordinariate congregation, we have a mission to bring folk into the communion of the Catholic Church through the continuing practice of our English Church patrimony. Both are important, and as we go forward, we will need to feel our way in balancing the demands of each.

Both affect our approach to the master plan. It is a given that we will need to repair the structural defects in the tower. The addition of the steeple would make a statement about our commitment to Bridgeport. Given the recent demolition of St Augustine's and Mother of Sorrows, such a visible construction project would be particularly notable: we are here, and we intend to be here for a very long time.

Since the other part of the mission is focused largely, though not exclusively, on the church, the interior alterations to the nave and sanctuary drew support in the meeting. The idea is to make the church more reflective of who we are and what we are doing as Catholics of the Anglican heritage. This in turn should make us more effective in drawing new people into our work and mission. Coming into a more "Anglican" building will communicate more of our identity than the more Italian interior we now have.

So the consensus (so far at least) is that the tower and the church interior have priority. My sense is that people feel that the parish house is usable as is, even if it has deficiencies (accessibility,

lack of good space for coffee hour and larger meetings, e.g.). I would add that being Ordinariate does not just mean “Anglican” worship and music – though it does mean that. It also means a commitment to those in need, on-going and serious instruction in the faith, an ardent desire to share the riches of God’s grace with others, and a love for the Church and her sacraments. This requires space besides the church.

Given the costs involved, it seems unlikely that we can do everything at once. So prioritizing will be a necessary element as we go forward. As reflected in the discussion, the priorities should be dictated by the mission. I am pleased that mission figured so prominently in the general discussion.

What happens next? The Pastoral Council will meet to reflect on the parish meeting. The Finance Council will also be meeting in July. If the Pastoral Council is ready to go ahead, then the Finance Council works through the financial ramifications and how to go about finding the money to implement the plan. If both Councils are ready to go ahead, then we will have a second congregational meeting. I think this is important, to allow everyone to ponder (in prayer) all that was said at the first meeting. Reasons for not proceeding now were expressed, and need to be considered. Minorities, even minorities of one, are not always wrong. Likewise, some people process things faster than others, and I want everyone to have ample opportunity to reflect before we go ahead. This is obviously a major decision for the parish, whether to proceed, when and with what priorities. I hope that all parishioners are and will be fully involved in the process.

### **New Initiatives**

We are planning to launch a new program for a **children’s choir**. The aim is for a group which will be trained in the liturgical music of our English patrimony, and able to offer an anthem at Sunday Mass from time to time. The young people will develop their vocal abilities and enjoy the unique experience which comes from participating in a group which can produce something greater than what any of the members could do alone. We will open the choir to children from outside the parish – both to nearby parishes which lack such choirs, and to home-school families who can make this part of their music education.

We are currently interviewing candidates for choir director, and expect to have one in place within the next couple of weeks. Then we will be able to settle the details – ages, time of rehearsals, etc., and begin recruitment in earnest. Meanwhile, please spread the word to any you think might be interested.

We are also starting a group for **high school youth**. This will be centered on a time for serious discussion of some topic of Christian faith and practice, such as marriage, heaven & hell, holiness. I will lead (and guide) the discussion. Supper and games also included. The group is not restricted to SJB youth: others welcome. It is open to high school students and recent graduates. Please let Fr Ousley know of any who might be interested. The plan is for several meetings during the summer, before continuing in the fall. The first meeting will be on Wednesday, July 18<sup>th</sup>, 7-8:30 (supper included). Time and day may be adjusted for future meetings, depending on what is best for the group. Since we are providing supper, we could use some volunteers to help with supper.

### **Continuing Programs**

If there is interest, I will again teach a Scripture class for home school high school juniors and seniors beginning in September. I have enjoyed doing this the past two years. For efficient use of time and to save wear and tear on parents, the class is on Skype rather than on-site. If you know of those who might be interested, please spread the word, and ask the parents to contact me.

On Friday, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 7:30, there will be a Holy Hour of adoration and intercession for our country. That the country needs prayer needs no argument. This is an opportunity for us to draw near to our merciful Lord, and share our concerns with Him.

The Society of the Patricians (the adult discussion group sponsored by the legion of Mary) will next meet on August 1<sup>st</sup>, at 6:30 in the parish house. This month’s topic: Padre Pio. All are welcome.

Our third Bridgeport Community Cookout is planned for Saturday, September 8<sup>th</sup> (our Lady’s birthday). This is a time for us to welcome our neighbors and friends for some free food and companionship. It is a chance for them to get to know us and for us to get to know them a bit more, and to help them get to know each other. The Thrift Shop will be open, and church tours provided as well as food. While the expenses are generously underwritten by the Bridgeport Knights of Columbus, and several of the Knights come to help, it is important for as many of St John’s folk as possible come to welcome our neighbors.

And be sure September 24<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of Our Lady of Walsingham is on your calendars: we will again be celebrating an Ordinariate form Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia.

Note that there will be no weekday Masses or Thursday confessions July 2-13. Nor will the regular weekly email from me appear until the third week in July.

Yours faithfully,  
Fr David Ousley