

An Autumn Update

On Tuesday morning, September 22nd, we crossed the threshold (astronomically) into Autumn, and the change of season certainly mirrors the almost daily changes that continue to govern our lives. Whether as a nation or an individual family, we've seldom been challenged to navigate more continual adaptation, upheaval, and uncertainty that we have over the past weeks and months. Some of us do better with all that than others—I hope you've been keeping safe and well grounded (though we all have our moments!), and trusting in the benevolence of God's constant, watchful care over our lives and our world, even when so much is in flux.

I thought it might not be a bad time to bring you up-to-date (as much as I can) on what's going on here at the parish, and what remains on hold. First, though, I need to extend a most heartfelt word of thanks to our parish community for having moved through the last half-year with such grace. With endless guidelines, restrictions, and schedules shifting so often, I couldn't blame anyone for becoming weary of it all. But the faith family here at St. Lawrence has shown amazing resilience, cooperation, sensitivity, and patience. We have no crystal ball to forecast what the coming weeks and months will bring, but your daily choice to entrust yourselves and those you love into the Lord's strong and gentle hands is beautiful to witness.

Worship:

- Most important of all, we have been gathering together to celebrate the Eucharist and the other sacraments since June. We continue to have Mass on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 9:00 AM (it seems wise not to expand that schedule yet, with Fr. Tom about to have surgery); on Saturdays at 5:00 PM; and on Sundays at 9 and 11:00 AM. The building's seating continues to be restricted, so as to maintain proper distancing, and while the number of parishioners returning to Mass in person has been gradually increasing, we still have had adequate seating for everyone.
- The 5:00 PM Saturday Mass is still being recorded for our parishioners who remain at home, and can be accessed via our YouTube channel. Just go to the link on the website's homepage.
- With the exception of the Anointing of the Sick, the other sacraments that nourish and sustain our spiritual life are all being celebrated communally, in all cases with modifications to accommodate the sanitizing of the church and maintenance of social distancing. Funeral and memorial Masses, confessions, baptisms, and weddings have all been taking place. We even managed to squeak in 3 beautiful celebrations of Confirmation, and 3 First Communion Masses during the summer months!
- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is taking place once again on the first Friday, from noon to 3:30 PM. (We may well take the opportunity again to have a "Drive-Thru" blessing with the Holy Eucharist, for those who have not yet returned to church.)

Faith Formation:

- Our Office of Faith Formation has been working hard for months now to construct a program for the coming year that will be both safe for our children and catechists, and also substantive and meaningful. Classes will be conducted entirely online for at least the next few months, most likely using Google Classroom. The reconfigured program is scheduled to begin on **Monday, October 19th**. Please pray for our children, catechists, and families!
- Registration is taking place now. All registrations must be returned by **October 1st**.
- A helpful page of FAQ's can be found on the parish website, and the Faith Formation Office is open to offer support and clarification as we embark on a very different style of educating our little ones in the faith.

Parish Outreach:

- The Outreach Office is open Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10:00 AM to 12 noon. Those volunteers who are comfortable have been assisting Lorraine Magyar with clients. Always feel free to contact the Office with questions, or requests for assistance.
- Lorraine and the whole Outreach staff are so very grateful for your ongoing use of the poor boxes, the food donation chests, and your generosity to our clients.

Parish Activities:

- Here, I wish I could say that everything we'd normally be gearing up for in the Fall were ready to begin again, but prudence dictates that we continue to be very thoughtful about what does and doesn't need to happen *in-person*. A number of our parish organizations (e.g., the Knights of Columbus, the Columbiettes, the choir, prayer groups) have either been meeting off-campus, online, or not at all for the time being. This is a delicate time, and we need to do our part in mitigating the chances of any new COVID-19 outbreaks; our vigilance and concern for one another have to remain paramount. I will miss October's "Taste of Sayville" as much as anybody, but safety and practicality have to take precedence for the time being.

Parish Finances:

- I mentioned in one of my many email blasts that the pandemic was going to force the cancellation of a number of summer activities for which we would normally receive income (e.g., summer/fall CYO and "Destination Science"). We did lose that rental income, but fortunately a favorite school tenant, the Lake Ronkonkoma Pre-School (LRPS), reopened on September 14th, and seems to be managing all the new restrictions and school protocols very well.
- I continue to be full of gratitude to the parish for seizing on the opportunity of these past 6 months to practice Stewardship in a most encouraging way. As you may have noticed in the bulletin, some of our collections during July and August (when both attendance and giving would typically dip) were as robust as we'd see during the other 10 months of the

year! So many of you have chosen to make supporting St. Lawrence a real priority—no matter the size of your weekly or monthly gift. Back in March, I don't think I could have presumed to see such consistency, with our world turned upside down. So by all means, PLEASE continue “doing what you're doing”!

Stay Connected!

As we move deeper into autumn, please continue to stay as connected to the life of the parish as you can. If you're attending Mass in person, I speak for the whole staff in saying it's wonderful to see you! If you're of an age, or dealing with health conditions that make returning unwise for now, please stay safe. The Bishop's dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass is still in effect—probably for some time to come.

Check our YouTube channel to view the weekend Mass (Joe Mankowski does a great job!), and keep checking the homepage of the parish's website for updates, news, and easy options for online giving. God is good (all the time!) . . . let's place our trust in him as we continue this challenging walk together.

Father Brian