

BECOMING THE PARISH GOD CALLS US TO BE

It is a great month for God and we always look to the month of May as one we reflect on the journey of our Blessed Mother. Like all of you, we are planning for the eventual reopening of public and religious places in accordance to the rule and regulations passed on by the government and then interpreted for specific implementation for our Diocese. These will be different and difficult times to adjust. We are blessed with a great staff who are planning, thinking and praying about the potential and the possibility. In the past week one of the new platforms I have begun to learn more about is Zoom. The staff had a Zoom Meeting and the Parish Council did also. Everyone from the safety of their own homes can participate and a dialogue can occur. While imperfect, it has become an opportunity to move from isolation to connection in a safe way. I am grateful for all that is taking place to create these connections. It is our hope to have May Crowning on Mother's Day Weekend. We will upload it to our YouTube channel for your participation. With the schools finishing out their school year through e-learning at home, so will be with the conclusion of our RE Program and our Godparent Program. I invite the entire parish to be thankful to all of the volunteers of this past year. Their efforts planted a great foundation and we look forward to the fall and what God has in store for all of us.

Still to be resolved is the celebration of upcoming Sacraments for our adults who have anxiously been waiting, parents anticipating the Baptism of their child and the children who have prepared for the reception of First Eucharist. As we await directions and guidelines be assured we are all excited for these to take place when we are able to gather and we are excited how our God, through sacramental grace, changes our lives. This is the one constant while we look forward to rescheduling the actual celebrations. These are not the easiest of times, but there is so much hope in the air. We will walk together and get through all of it. God will continue to make His dwelling with us and the purity of His love will be proclaimed.

I am grateful for your patience and support. Once again a great thank you for our volunteer catechists and all who made this year a great one for faith formation of our children and young people.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Fr. John'.

Fr. John

RECOGNIZING THE VOICE OF THE SHEPHERD

One of the valuable gifts of technology is voice recognition. How often have we asked a question using our voice on our smartphone? How often have we pressed a button on our television remote and spoke the words of what we are trying to find? From cars answering phones, to Alexa or Siri or all the others out there, voice commands are taking over the technology of our homes. Now they even have smart faucets that can measure the water after you put the container under it. While all of this is fascinating and convenient, we come together to reflect not on how we are using our voice to command, but to listen to the commands of another voice, that of the Good Shepherd.

In the Gospel today, Jesus lets the people of His day know that His sheep recognize His voice. His sheep follow because they know the love that is communicated in His voice. So what do we need to do to recognize His voice and to truly know it is His? That is the important question; that is the crucial challenge of our journey in faith. With so many voice commands filling the airways and the ways to our souls, how do we get to what is authentic? It always amazed me at family gatherings that when there would be an incident and one of my nephews or niece at an early age would start crying, my siblings without even being in the room could tell whose child it was. That unique connection of a parent's love to their child is amazing. It is a bond based in love. That same love is found in our relationship with Jesus. He tells us He is the gateway to a journey with God. He knows our voice because of love and we are to know His in the very same way.

To know it is Him is to know the purity of His love for us. To know it is Him is to realize His voice is not one of condemnation or hatred, nor would it invite you to a hatred of others. It is a voice warmed with love, filled with understanding and one that allows grace to well up inside. It is unique and has the power to reach the depths of our very selves, that we did not even know we have. When that voice comes, kneel down and allow it to possess you and be grateful.

To be prepared to be the best listeners, we must acknowledge our faith, learn more about who Jesus is and what He did while He walked the face of the earth. We have to rule out all voices that are contrary to a voice of love and forgiveness. To better prepare ourselves we must quiet all the voices within ourselves that are looking for something, asking for something or looking for undeniable proof. All of these will become distractions to becoming the best possible receiver.

Of all the voices of the world, and there are many competing for our attention, this is the voice of consistent love, not of what we want, but of a love that surpasses this world. From the Mount of Transfiguration in which out of the cloud came the voice of the heavenly Father, "This is my beloved Son, listen to Him", to the sound of Jesus praying to his Father, "Your will be done", this is the voice who most intimately says to us, "Take and Eat, this is my body, Take and Drink, this is my blood."

Above all else, follow that voice,



Fr. John Ouper