

## REOPENING ST. ANNE CHURCH

There is no greater joy in this time than to be working towards the opening up of our church. You might have caught some of the news items or searched the websites of the diocese to get updates about how and when. While I cannot give you a date, I can tell you we have a great compliance team working to discern what will be the best way to invite you back and what that will look like. It will take a lot of effort on all of our parts. New norms regarding Baptisms, Funerals and Weddings have been set. While we are working on how to do that well, we will also invite you to private prayer in our Chapel. This too will have a process. It will involve safety procedures that will need to be followed. The wearing of face masks, social distancing and disinfecting the surfaces that have been touched will be added to the importance of sanitizing your hands before you enter. You will also need to be recorded as being here. We need this for contact tracing purposes only. The committee is working diligently to have us be and stay safe as best we can. The effort and responsibility is placed on all of us.

The dispensation from attending Mass remains in place indefinitely. Therefore, every person entering is taking a risk and everyone who decides to attend must be free of symptoms. In our love for one another as Jesus asks of us, we must search our heart to be sure we are doing the right thing. God knows our desire and longing. He understands our passion to return, but we must also be the best of stewards of our own health. We must respond responsibly to what He is truly asking of us and those around us.

The Holy Spirit of Pentecost is alive and we are walking together to build the new Church. It may never be exactly the same again, but it also may be stronger than ever before.



Father John

## BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT?

As we embrace this Solemnity of Pentecost, our openness to the Holy Spirit is paramount. We are to be led to places we never imagined, in ways never conceived before. The early Church bore witness to the flexibility, the openness and the excitement of looking forward, knowing they were living in the power of God. They took adversity and persecution in stride. They related to a Jesus crucified and expected nothing less in their lives. Being led by the Spirit meant they embraced the moment given to them expecting resentment and rejection. Overcoming their fear, the early followers looked only to the heavens and knew strength was on the way.

When I went to Africa for the first time, I was a young priest in my twenties. What I witnessed in Ethiopia was a rejoicing and reverence for life even in the midst of a drought and surrounded by starvation. Happiness came from an openness to blessing that made the day tolerable. It was amazing and overwhelming to me. The battle for all of us is can we be led by the Spirit or are we trying to lead the Spirit? Too often we try to lead the Spirit by building up walls of protection, walls of security. The disciples had to leave the locked room and engage in the world. They had to overcome fear and not worry about results. They had to walk in a newness of life trusting in the Holy Spirit and all that Jesus had given them.

We live in a new world. We are being called to live faith and express our spirituality in new ways. Fear is not to lead us. We are not to lead ourselves. There will be new outbreaks and there will be new tragedies. Fear cannot stop these. There will also be new stories of heroes and heroines; there will be new breakthroughs and setbacks. Depression is real; the loss of jobs and revenue are real. All of this can allow us to be led to places of hopelessness and despair. Instead, we are to be led by the Spirit. The battle has not changed. We may try to do the leading; we may try to convince ourselves that our own voice is interpreting the Holy Spirit correctly. Trust me; that is a dangerous place to be. Being led is not leading. Being led is staying open to the ever changing landscape of the present, knowing ultimately God is in control. It is easy to lose that, especially in the present day climate.

Now more than ever, we must stand in confidence even when it is six feet apart from one another. We must walk with hope even if we are wearing a face mask. We are to be fierce with forgiveness and understanding in a time when frustration is over abundant. Now is our time to be led. Being led is the hardest thing to do when we are a people driven to accomplish, driven to perfection and driven to be correct. The Holy Spirit is beyond being driven. The experience of the Spirit is to do the driving.

May this Pentecost find us in prayer, surrendering to the authentic Holy Spirit. Peace will come when we do.



Father John J. Ouper