

A TIME OF GIVING THANKS

This year is like no other. We are constantly being reminded that the needs of others have not changed because we wear masks, the needs of others have not changed because we social distance. The invitation of how we respond is what has changed. Sister Margaret Anne and the Giving Tree Committee have spent hours of preparation looking at countless alternatives as to how we can provide for those in need, those who are counting on us for the same abundance of blessings as we have provided in the past. This year, we are going totally plastic. This seems to be the safest way for us to help families, help seniors, help those whom we have always placed on the Giving Tree whom are still hurting and wanting. To keep them safe, to keep our volunteers safe, we are providing a non-contact gift in the form of gift cards. While it is not the same, the destination and the spirit of the gift has not changed. Please see the information provided by the Giving Tree experience in this Bulletin and help us to help others.

St. Vincent de Paul is also continuing to respond to calls and provides assistance as they always have. They are taking safety precautions as they discern the new needs facing those who are stressed in this pandemic. As always, the Thanksgiving Day Collection goes entirely to their ministry. I ask you to please make a donation to them as it is the collection in which they create their entire yearly budget. Please take the time to use the St. Vincent de Paul envelope at any time this month so they may be enabled to help those who feel unconnected, forgotten and unheard.

In a month of thanksgiving, in a month in which we wonder when all of this will end, we are invited to stay focused on what we can do. We are invited to continue to carry out in a faith filled way the invitation of Jesus to see Him in the poor, the hungry and the homeless. I have always been thrilled at how we as a parish have responded. New obstacles have obviously arisen, but our charity can overcome any wall placed before us.

Thank you for your faithfulness and your willingness to help,



Father John

THE FESTIVAL OF THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM

What a blessing and gift to be alive! On this day we celebrate a festival in heaven and we gather as Church. We are invited to have a foothold in two places at the same time. We gather with all of the saints and are drawn to this celebration in heaven. It is a celebration beyond our imagination. There is an immense vastness to this glorious festival and we are in union with it. We come together as a Church in this place to give thanks for how we are called to live our faith in the expectation of being called to that heavenly realm. We echo what is proclaimed in the first reading from Revelation, "Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb." The vastness and scope of this celebration is to take our breath away. John gives us a description in our first reading of all who are invited. The vision begins with the descendants from every tribe of the children of Israel. The covenant is found true, Israel and its descendants are at the festival. Then the next group is recognized, it is a great multitude that no one can count. All of this is for this celebration of saints. This goes beyond the saints we can recall, the names we know, like St. Anne, St. Benedict, St. Scholastica, St. Francis, St. Clare, St. John, St. John Paul the Second and St. Lucy. It is such a vast number no one can count. But the vision is not over. Yet another group is placed at the festival, those who are wearing white robes. These are ones who survived the time of great distress and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. This invitation is the one that connects heaven and earth. We are called in this Eucharistic celebration to come to the Supper of the Lamb. We say together, "Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us and grant us peace." We proclaim a response to this incredible invitation to bring ourselves to the blood of the Lamb and be cleansed. When we do, our sins are forgiven, our salvation comes from the Lamb of sacrifice who died for our sins. This first reading offers us a doorway to living for heaven while walking in the time of great distress and anxiousness. We are to always be aware of heaven and its great invitation to this celebration in the festival of the heavenly Jerusalem. At the same time we are also called to seek the source of our salvation and we are to echo the proclamation here and now, "Salvation comes from our God who is seated on the throne and from the Lamb." We are to seek that salvation each and every day on earth. We are to embrace Jesus the young preacher who tells His disciples on the Mount in the Gospel, "... Blessed are the poor in spirit...Blessed are those who mourn...Blessed are those who hunger." When we see the blessings that may be found in the poor, those who mourn and those who are hungry, we catch a glimpse of how we are to present ourselves to the Lamb and to this altar of sacrifice.

This day is truly a day of rejoicing when we get a chance to open a door to the vastness of saints, the opportunity to walk in two realms with our heart focused on heaven and our mind and body focused on seeking salvation from the One who offers it.



Father John Ouper