

**Companions on the Journey**

**May 2, 2021**

**Dear Friends,**

This past Saturday a good number of our parish youngsters in the second or third grade made their First Holy Communion here at Saint Anthony's. We had two parish celebrations in order to accommodate both the number of students and their families as well as to make sure our celebration proceeded in a very safe fashion. Both the morning and the early afternoon celebrations were beautiful affairs. The children each sat with his or her own family. That is different from what is customary. Usually the children all sit in a group in the front section of the church. We may not return to those kinds of celebrations because the child surrounded by family worked so well and proceeded very smoothly.

And both celebrations were prayerful, respectful, joyful and moving. This, despite the fact that the children had not been to church in the past year and they are still pretty young. But our Director of Religious Education, Mrs. Angela Lawlor, a young mom herself, worked tirelessly to make sure that all the students were prepared and knowledgeable and able to have a truly warm experience of their Lord in this sacrament. Angela and her catechists, Robin Maguire, Bonnie Keagy, Colleen Cemprola and Tanya Prickitt, and the Principal at Our Lady of Mercy, John McGrath and the teachers, Dana Nowaczyk and Dorothy Hogan covered all the bases assisting the parents who really stepped up in this era of virtual learning to assure everything was ready. I am most grateful for their ministry and their dedication.

In addition, Mrs. Eileen Groody our Director of Music and our cantor Gina Allen were spirited and reverent and beautiful in leading the congregation in hymns of praise. I am also grateful for our Archdeacon, Dave Jones and Ella Ranzon and Michael Laux our servers for their assistance. My gratitude to the members of the Flower Committee who were responsible for the beautiful flower arrangements that garlanded our sanctuary.

I am also so very grateful to all the member of the staff here at Saint Anthony's, our other deacons Kevin Gentilcore and Mike Cuff, Barbara Daly Pastoral Associate, Ellen Afflerbach Parish Secretary, Rebeca, Coordinator of Ecumenical Affairs and Parish Outreach, Christy Cincotta, Director of Early Childhood Programs, Oleg Berezovski our Facilities Manager, Joe Imperiale our sexton, Anne Pursell who oversees our Safe Environment compliance, Phil McHenry who handles the financial matters of the parish. Between the parish and Child Care programs we run a \$3 million operation each year. It takes the best to make things run smoothly and that is doubly important during this pandemic. We are all blessed to have such a wonderful and efficient staff. When you see any of them speak a word of gratitude. Much of what they do is invisible and behind the scenes but as it says in The Little Prince: "What is essential is often invisible to the eye." Yes it is. But I am most grateful for the signs that are all around us.

And last but certainly not least. To you the faithful parishioners here at Saint Anthony's. I am most grateful for your presence, your care, your support, your prayers, your care for those in need, for your devotion to your children and the other children of the parish. You are the holy ones who are blessed by the Lord and graced for all you do. Know how grateful I am for you. Let us continue to pray for each other.

**In the Peace of Christ,  
Msgr. McHenry**