

Companions on the Journey

January 9, 2022

Dear Friends,

A great word of thanks in this new year of 2022. Just typing that year feels strange to me. Already we are 22 years into the twenty-first century, almost a quarter of the way in. Do you remember the millennial year, also known as Y2K? Would the computers survive? Had they been programmed to allow for the turn of a new century? Well, that turns out to have been a non-issue. But much, very much has happened in these twenty-two years since we entered this century.

But my focus today is on a very minute part of all that. My focus is on our dear parish of Saint Anthony's, now in our 136th year of existence. We are doing pretty well all things considered but there are always speed bumps along the way that force us to slow down lest we lose the entire load we carry or brake an axle. It is almost two full years of this pandemic and there has been attrition. We have lost a great number of our core, long-time parishioners here. Not all to covid but many of them. There is hardly a week goes by when we are not laying one or two of them to rest. They are your family members, our moms and dads, your brothers and sisters, your grandparents. Your children at times. We commend all to our life-giving and saving Lord. We have reason to be thankful. God has won the victory for us. Love wins. Death has been vanquished. The darkness has been overcome. Light has returned.

There are transitions. There is illness. There are multiple changes. Jobs change. Families change. Parishioners change. Some move in and some move on. It is the ebb and flow of parish life. But through it all the Lord Jesus is always the same—yesterday, today and forever. The Lord is always here. God with us. Emmanuel. We are thankful and grateful. We are able to keep our church doors open all day, every day. Many stop in to pray. To spend some time before Our Lord reserved in the Tabernacle. It is a quiet and prayerful sacred space, both the Church and the Mary Chapel.

We continue to offer ways to help you to teach your children the ways of the faith even though so much now happens in your homes and you are once again in the rolls of first teachers in the ways of faith. I baptized a little baby on January 2nd and I watched closely how that dad held that baby so close, so tenderly throughout the ceremony and then when it was over he and his wife and I walked to the Main Altar of the Church and gently we placed that infant on the altar, right where I stand to celebrate Eucharist; right where the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The little one is placed on the altar of God as a recognition that this child—as every child—is such a gift of God. And we offer our love to the Lord in return as a sign of our gratitude. Yes, this is a time for gratitude despite all that besets us and distracts us. Let us look for reasons to rejoice and give thanks. Let us recognize how our God still comes to us. Let us seek his blessing as this New Year gets under way. Happy new Year to all!

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry