

Companions on the Journey

April 23, 2023

Dear Friends in Christ,

This coming Saturday is our parish celebration for First Holy Communion. It is always a very moving day for the youngsters and their families. You may well remember your own First Communion. Mine was on May 16, 1954. It was at the end of my First Grade rather than Second Grade. I was seven years old and attending Saint David Elementary School in Willow Grove. But a new parish was being founded in Roslyn, my home town. It was Saint John of the Cross. We did not have a church or school of our own. It was part of the Post World War II Baby Boom and families were moving from the city of Philadelphia into the suburbs around Philadelphia.

The new pastor, Father Mike McMahon, was a dynamo in getting this new parish established. He rented a small store in a strip mall along Easton Road and had it outfitted with an altar and some chairs for the participants. Later I learned that the store had been a beer distributor's store. Hmmm! In any event I was allowed to receive because my sister Barbara, who was in seventh grade at Saint David's was asked by Father Mike if she would teach the little kids about the sacraments so that we could have our own parish celebrations. She did teach the handful of children being prepared but while doing that she was also minding me her little brother and I was soaking up the teaching along with the other kids.

When the pastor came to question the students about what they were learning he realized that I had absorbed as much as these others. And because I was seven, he declared to my parents that he believed I was ready to make my First Holy Communion. So suddenly there I was, part of the first First Holy Communion class at Saint John of the Cross parish.

A picture of that day is facing me right now as I type into the computer. That class was very small. Saint Anthony's will be larger this year but since the coronavirus first arrived we have offered alternative opportunities for our children to receive First Communion. On the Sundays of May there will be young ones making their First Communion as the 10:30 regularly scheduled Mass. There may be as many as five children or so. They will be dressed and ready but in smaller numbers. It was a family choice.

Would you please pray for these young members of our parish family especially this week and through the month of May. Pray that their experience of Jesus in the Eucharist will touch their hearts and draw them closer to Him. That their experience will help them to realize that Jesus is real and that

he desires a close friendship with Him. Your prayers will help the children. Their prayers will in turn be a blessing upon all our parish families in their innocence and faith.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry