



## RECTOR'S LETTER

Dear friends in Christ,

Happy Easter! Never forget that Easter is not a daylong event, but a fifty-day celebration. So again, Happy Easter! While the Church calendar calls us to observe the Easter feast for a few more weeks, our world seems to have very little to celebrate. News regarding the COVID-19 pandemic continues to control our airwaves and collective consciousness, and rightfully so. There is still a long way to go in the path to recovery.



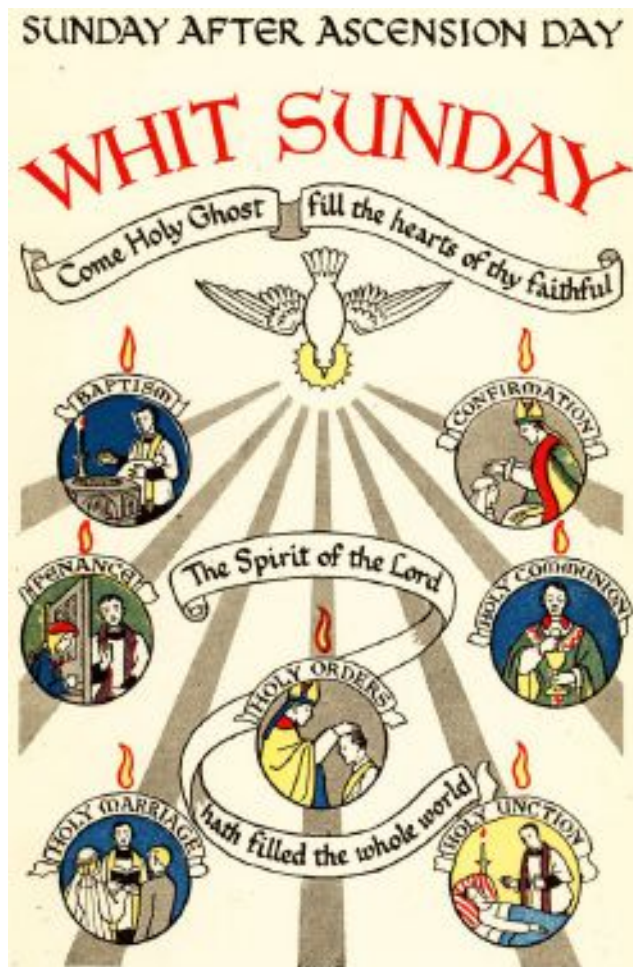
There are times when I feel like we're stuck in a continuous Lententide (the season of Lent) as we continue to follow our, as a friend lightheartedly put it, "Coronatide" disciplines. We have not been able to celebrate the Paschal Feast; we have not been able to shout Alleluia! Christ is risen! and sing our favorite Easter hymns; and we have not been able to be together in prayer, worship, and fellowship. Yet, the tomb is empty. The Lord is risen indeed, and we are invited to feel and experience the risen Jesus; we are charged to show the love of God made known through Jesus Christ to the brokenhearted, the fearful, and the poor. And we need his resurrection, his victory over death, more than ever.

Since the cancellation of public worship went into effect, my heart has been full of gratitude for your faithfulness and generosity. Our grand experiment of using Facebook Live to stream our worship services has worked very well, after tweaking a few things and finding the proper extension microphone. We have been able to stay connected through our weekly e-news, pastoral messages, and social media. Some parishioners and I have reached out to other members of this parish, especially to those for whom accessing our online offerings is not possible. Groceries have been purchased, Easter flowers have been dropped off, phone calls and cards exchanged—much has been happening behind the scenes.

Beyond serving our members, this parish has served dozens in our community. From offering short-term food assistance through the Saint Christopher Fund to assisting with rent and utilities for those whose work hours have been cut, or who have been laid off; to purchasing and donating food and other goods to our community partners—this parish is alive and well! Even though we've been "closed," we have not



stopped offering hope, love, and charity during this pandemic; quite the contrary. We have increased our Christian witness in Bellefonte and beyond. Thank you for being who you are: the faithful people of Saint John's; the Body of the Risen Christ.



I want to end with a note about something you will hear more about in the coming weeks: reopening the church. Off the bat, I want to share with you that we do not have an exact date when we'll be open for public worship. The reason is that rather than working toward a specific date, we will work on ensuring that we are able to offer a safe space for worship. The Diocese is currently developing guidelines for parishes to reopen. I will work with the vestry to ensure that we are able to meet the guidelines, not only to open, but to adjust appropriately in the weeks and months ahead. This will require developing a process for proper cleaning

and disinfecting before and after worship, as well as a change to our fellowship and other communal activities. I have already been in conversation with Erik Clayton about our liturgy and music, since I can't imagine that our actual worship will not be impacted by these important safety steps. While I don't know how Diocesan guidelines will affect all these moving parts, I can guarantee you that our prayer and worship of Almighty God will continue to be rooted in the Catholic faith, steeped in rich music, and centered on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Once I receive these guidelines and am able to review them with the vestry, you will hear more, in greater detail, about our plans to reopen.

I look forward to the day when we'll be able to safely meet again. I long to be with you in our beautiful sanctuary, offering the sacrifice of the mass as an act of thanksgiving and supplication during these difficult times. May Almighty God, who has redeemed us and made us his children through the resurrection of his Son our Lord, bestow upon you the riches of his blessing.

Yours in the Risen Christ, **Fr. Carlos†**

### **FROM THE DEACON'S PERCH**

*3 John 1:2 - "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well."*



Because many of us have not seen each other since March, I was trying to figure out what words of comfort to say or something to uplift our spirits as we social distance during this pandemic. I would call you, but with my hearing devices, I can really mess

up a conversation (ask Ellen about that). As I look at newscasts and talk shows to keep updated, I feel comforted and supported from this line from a commercial on NBC that we are truly fortunate to be in this country: “We are alone today so we can be together tomorrow.” We are grateful for our first responders, doctors, nurses, health-care workers, food suppliers, trash haulers, mail and package deliverers, and so many others, so that we can be safe with our families. As many of you parents are bonding with your children as never before, know that these moments will be shared for years to come and will be remembered by many.

I have the privilege of serving with Fr. Carlos at the altar during our Wednesday healing service as well as on Sunday morning as we pray for all of you, your families, and friends. The church has recently been a sanctuary for me to pray in a way I haven’t done in many years. The term I use is divine intimacy. In an empty church, with empty pews, a solitary candle burning at the altar, and slight darkness, I begin to pray. I start to feel a glowing fire in my heart as if God were sitting there listening to my every word, feeling every emotion. At times I shed a tear for the sheer joy of feeling his presence, and I ponder whether he will speak actual words. I guess when that happens, I will be either carted out or given some kind of medication to alter my spiritual burst of God’s presence. This seems abstract, I know, but we have been given the opportunity to experience those feelings, either by volunteering or caring for a neighbor—or just saying thank you to those who provide for us.

As I observe all the gratitude from those who have received help, I can’t help but feel a love throughout our humanity that we haven’t seen since the tragedies of Sandy Hook, Hurricane Katrina, and the recent tornadoes and flooding in the southern and midwestern states. We can find the positive aspects

of human tragedy when we see people cross religious boundaries to help feed, clothe, and shelter their neighbors. This, my friends, is what 3 John meant: that we may enjoy good health and that we are getting along.

Father Carlos and I have been keeping busy with community service. Most recently, with Ellen’s help, we provided snacks for the health care workers at Mt. Nittany Hospital.



Peggy Jackson, Rebecca Clayton, Paula Hough, and Christine Holt made face masks for those who need them; Erik and Rebecca are doing online singing; Erik provides his gift of music at church on Sunday



mornings; and Scott Mauger has helped in many ways. A special thanks to Deb for doing this newsletter, and a welcome back from Florida to her and Dave.

The St. Christopher fund that Fr. Carlos set up and my Deacon's Discretionary Fund have been gratefully appreciated by many in our community.



On April 30 we received word that the FaithCentre food bank did not get their funding for April, so Fr. Carlos and I went to Sam's Club to purchase canned fruit and cereal. There was a limit on how much we could buy, so we dropped off our purchases and then went to the Weis store to get more groceries. We filled our carts with spaghetti, fruit, soups, and other canned items. When got to the checkout, they also limited our purchases, but they allowed us to buy ten items at a time and then start again. We accomplished our goal and delivered the groceries to many smiling faces at the food bank. We couldn't do this without your support, so a heartfelt thank you to our St. John's family.

I would like to wish Fr. Carlos a Happy First Anniversary as our Rector. There aren't enough words in my limited vocabulary to express my gratitude for all his hard work in uplifting the congregation, his guidance, and his leadership. He is also a priest who gets his hands dirty. He washes down the pews, scrubs the floors, and has cleaned out all the junk from the parish hall. I can't remember when we have had such order and storage of things in their proper places. Thank You, Fr. Carlos, and thank God for giving you to us as our Shepherd.



I would like to remind everyone that I am available to you for a talk or if you have spiritual needs; please email ([deaconalex@gmail.com](mailto:deaconalex@gmail.com)) or call me (814-883-0430). ~Deacon Alex†

### **SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE**

Beginning in April, Fr. Carlos and Miss Ellen have had the opportunity to keep in touch with our young parishioners by ZOOM conferences with individual families. A new schedule will be set for May.

Since we have been unable to meet as a group, families are now receiving Living the Good News at Home each week. This is our new formation initiative for children and families. It offers our youngest members and their households the opportunity to discuss and grow in their Christian faith. Each week families receive a 2-3-minute sermon video, a passage of scripture from the lectionary, questions to guide discussion with their families, and a coloring/activity page as an extension project.

During the month of May we challenge our youth to create a Sign of Hope and share it with their community. Pictures will be displayed on our website. Be safe and healthy until we are together again.  
~ *Miss Ellen*



*Clayton Family working on their project.*



### **Vestry Members:**

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# May 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 <b>Bdays:</b> Avery North	2
3 Fourth Sunday of Easter Parish Mass 10 via Facebook  <b>Bdays:</b> Genavieve Clayton Bette Shugert	4	5 10:00 am Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom	6 9:30 Monthly Parish Requiem via Facebook  <b>Bdays:</b> Karen Harvey	7 6:00 pm Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom  <b>Bdays:</b> Elizabeth Helms	8	9
10 Fifth Sunday of Easter  Parish Mass 10 via Facebook 	11	12 10:00 am Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom	13 9:30 Low Mass via Facebook	14 6:00 pm Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom	15	16
17 Sixth Sunday of Easter  Parish Mass 10 via Facebook	18	19 10:00 am Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom <b>HAPPY ANNIVERSARY FATHER CARLOS</b> <b>Bdays:</b> Andrea Skirpan	20 9:30 Low Mass via Facebook  7:00 pm Vestry <b>Bdays:</b> Mike Duminiak	21 6:00 pm Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom	22	23
24 Seventh Sunday of Easter  Parish Mass 10 via Facebook	25 	26 10:00 am Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom  <b>Bdays:</b> Ciara Ousley	27 9:30 Low Mass via Facebook	28 6:00 pm Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom  <b>Bdays:</b> Erik Clayton Abby Fetters	29	30 <b>Bdays:</b> Jeff Wilson
31 Pentecost Parish Mass 10 via Facebook						