

EMERGING OUT OF THE SHADOWS: SILVER LININGS AMIDST THE CLOUDS

A change is taking place— a change as noticeable as the full leaving of the trees on Summit Ave. People are emerging from the long and isolating pandemic. Following the recent unexpected CDC statement about face masks, I was eager to read the latest Executive Order regarding COVID-19 related issues from Gov. Walz. While the vast majority have grown weary of these protocols, we sought to cooperate for the sake of the **common good**. The most recent protocols reveal significant **progress**, and it is opportune to bring you up to speed on our plans both for the immediate future, as well as glancing towards the horizon. The **gold ropes** that have been a fixture in our Church for over a year have mostly **been** placed in storage. When we purchased them (I was not about to use yellow caution tape!), I hoped it would not be seen as a frivolous expense. I chose them because they looked dignified. I had no idea that they would **remain** in place for **14 months!**

Those gold ropes have provided the necessary spacing in our vast nave, and two sections remain as such for those who are more comfortable with spacing. First, we blocked off 2/3 of the pews, and more recently, every other pew. Your willingness to **cooperate** by spreading out on **both sides** of the Church has been extremely helpful. While it is more convenient to sit closer to the Selby Ave. exit and parking lot, it greatly assists **traffic flow** for Holy Communion when the faithful spread out more deliberately. Even more than that, it improves the priest's ability to preach when more of the faithful are located closer to the Sunday high pulpit! We can see you! Now, you may sit freely as you wish. At the same time, people who desire to space themselves as they are comfortable, are certainly being afforded that **option** given our vast interior.

There are **silver linings** resulting from these protocols. Most importantly, our Holy Communion etiquette has **improved** rather dramatically. While receiving Communion in the hand, we have been instructing all to hold their hands completely **flat**— not reaching for the host or too quickly consuming it before the one distributing has **removed** his or her hand— this has worked quite well. **Reception** of Communion is just that— an act of receiving, and **not** one of taking. Ideally, we place one hand over the other, forming if you will, a **mini-altar** upon which the sacred host is placed. Communicants receive immediately before returning to their pews. Another silver lining has been a more consistent Sunday **stewardship** based upon EFT, or electronic funds transfer. This provides a **regular stream** of stewardship income to the Church, even when you may not be able to be present on a given Sunday. I encourage you to maintain this practice— the financial **stability** this provides is as appreciated as it is needed.

As we emerge, other changes will be forthcoming. Based upon the science, the benefits of daily sanitizing the surface of the wooden pews is unclear, as was the protocol removing hymnals. Our Director of Sacred Music, Lawrence Lawyer, has done an outstanding job in **redesigning** the Liturgy Guide in the weekly bulletin to **include the readings**, in light of the absence of the hymnals. Straw poll? **Would you prefer** to keep the readings in the liturgy guide? Please, **let us know** your thoughts—many find it quite handy to have everything in **one place**. The cleaning has certainly taken a toll upon our century-old pews. For the Sacrament of Penance, for those who prefer to wipe down the surface of the confessional kneeler and screen before each use, **cleansing wipes** are available at each person's discretion. Let us respect each other's preferences with respect to wearing masks, cognizant that people have prudently arrived at a decision.

Some parish groups have resumed **in-person** meetings on a limited basis, and we are actively moving towards **opening the Church** for additional hours each day. For security purposes, when

the church is open, it is important to have someone in the building. At some point this summer, we desire to **resume public tours**, which will positively impact staffing, providing a presence in the Church. We will proceed organically and incrementally as we move deeper into summer. We cannot remain closed in upon ourselves. Emerging from the pandemic will require a **realignment** of priorities and resources, preceded by an honest reflection upon how our parish operates. For example, most are now reaching out to us via e-mails to arrange Mass intentions. Today, 50% of my marriage prep sessions are via Zoom, convenient for busy couples and those living in different states due to school. Frankly, I see that trend continuing into the future.

We will be re-engaging the Archdiocesan Synod (more to follow in a future bulletin) and looking for the most efficient ways to serve our parishioners and visitors, while **realistically** assessing our capabilities. As the only priest assigned full-time, I do **not** envision the return of the 5:15 p.m. daily Mass. The pre-Socratic philosopher **Heraclitus** was credited with saying, “The only constant in life is change.” Though he said that **500 years** before the birth of Jesus, there is a great deal of truth in his words. I am not especially fond of change, in particular if done just for the sake of change. I like tradition! However, we **must adapt** to changing circumstances if we desire the venerable truths of our faith to remain relevant. This requires our parish operation to be nimble, welcoming and proactive as we look to a future filled with hope.

- Saint Thomas Academy Chaplain Fr. Mark Pavlak has been a most welcome presence in the rectory. He has accepted an invitation to live in housing on the school grounds. With numerous evening school events, the convenience factor is undeniable. Though he will not be able to assist as often moving forward, we remain grateful that he will **continue assisting** here on Sundays. What a **blessing** Fr. Pavlak is to our Cathedral parish!
- Pope Francis called on Catholics to pray for **Chinese Catholics** at his Pentecost Sunday Angelus address. He invites us to accompany the Christian faithful in China, “dearest brothers and sisters, whom I hold in the depth of my heart,” with “fervent prayer.” For some time, these pages have highlighted the plight, both of Catholics as well as the **Muslim Uighurs**. Religious liberty is imperiled.
- The murder of a University of St. Thomas student on the night before his graduation (School of engineering) was truly horrific. He was innocently caught in the crossfire in downtown Minneapolis, shot while **fleeing** a chaotic argument between two others, with whom he had no connection. Is it any wonder that people are avoiding downtown? Our **cities are in crisis**. That is not hyperbole—it is real.
- “Congratulations— you are a finalist in our drawing!” I had signed up at the State Fair Auto Show and the voicemail had me thinking I may have won something. Not so fast— as a “finalist,” I now have a **1 in 5000** chance of winning the national drawing for a new RV! Okay, thanks for calling. Of course, what would I do with an RV?
- Additional **ushers** and **EMHC’s** are needed—training is available to those expressing interest. Please prayerfully consider volunteering.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector