

Letter to the People of Saint Joseph's Church

To our beloved parishioners:

It is with sincere gratitude that we are able to serve you as priests. Saint Joseph's remains strong, vibrant, and faithful because of your support, generosity, dedication, and most importantly because of your love for God and His church.

We know many of you find our beautiful Church a respite from the noise and distractions of busy schedules. We invite you to make a visit to Saint Joseph's Church an essential part of your day. It is always wonderful to see so many stopping to pray, light a candle, or attend one of our daily masses.

As priests we can wear many collars: the priest-manager, the priest-teacher, the priest-counselor, but our most important, priest-spiritual father, the one we take most seriously is serving you our parishioners. As a good father knows, sometimes one needs to encourage, instruct, and perhaps even correct those under his charge.

Time to time we can find ourselves slipping into some bad habits and therefore as a parish community, we need to pause and re-examine how we approach the Eucharist.

We ask you to prayerfully consider the following so that together we might continue to build a thriving and faith-filled parish here at St. Joseph's.

The Sacrifice of the Mass

What we celebrate each day as Catholics, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is more than just saying words and actions. It is the very center of our spiritual lives and the means by which we encounter Christ in both our community and in Holy Communion.

We are so fortunate to still be able to have three daily Masses and seven Sunday Masses each with a large congregation. This reflects the substantial faith present in our parish. Yet sadly there are a significant number of people who habitually come late for Mass. We are not speaking of the occasional lateness, but to those who are regularly arriving late. Some miss most, if not all, of the Liturgy of the Word. The scripture readings, the Gospel, and the homily serve to expose us to the importance of God's word and its meaning for our lives.

Therefore, we encourage you to try to arrive a few minutes early thus allowing time to settle down and prepare for what we are about to experience. This is the center of our lives as Catholics and nothing could be more important.

We welcome you into the main body of the Church and not to simply attend Mass in the vestibule or foyer. Even if you arrive after Mass has begun, please make your way into the church. Our vestibule is primarily meant to be a place where we gather before or after Mass. Here at St. Joseph's it also serves as a "crying" room for parents and children who might need such a space. It is not intended to be the place to attend Mass separate from the rest of the congregation.

We kindly request that you follow the direction of the ushers in finding a seat. If due to overcrowding you find yourself standing in the back of the church, we ask that for the reception of Holy Communion you please come forward to receive. The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion will only bring Communion to those parishioners who are physically unable to walk down the aisle to receive.

Please dress appropriately for Mass. Just as the priest wears something other than his normal "street clothes" to reflect the sacredness and dignity of the Mass, we ask that you also approach the altar dressed in an appropriate manner.

A recurring problem that we frequently experience in church involves cell phones. We kindly ask that all phones and other electronic devices be either turned off or put on vibrate. This will help us maintain an atmosphere of prayerfulness and reverence. Similarly, we ask that when you are in the main body of the Church casual conversation with your relatives and friends be kept to a minimum. Many parishioners arrive early specifically to spend some extra time in prayer. This becomes a challenge when others are involved in conversation.

Unless it is absolutely necessary to leave church early please stay until the conclusion of the Mass. To receive Holy Communion and then immediately exit the Church does not reflect the sacredness of the gift of the Eucharist. People constantly entering and

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exiting the church during Mass does not allow for a prayerful celebration of the Eucharist and can be distracting and at times even insulting to other parishioners.

We are sure that you will agree with us, our church is not only a sacred place, but also a place of beauty. Unfortunately this beauty is marred when such items as coffee cups, water bottles, bulletins and newspapers are left in the church at the conclusion of Mass. Please, take pride in your church and leave it a manner befitting the House of God.

Preparation for Holy Communion

Preparation for the reception of Holy Communion is important. As Catholics we not only receive communion but we are also in communion with the Church, the Body of Christ. Sin is what separates us from this union and so it is vital that when we have committed any serious [mortal] sins that we abstain from the reception of Holy Communion until we have received the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

St. Joseph's offers the Sacrament of Reconciliation seven times a week. Confessions are heard following the noon mass from Monday to Saturday. Additionally, on Saturday this sacrament is available from 4:00pm to 4:45 pm.

Reception of Holy Communion

As Catholics the Eucharist is the center of our worship at the Mass. Our Lord gave us the Eucharist as his abiding presence and as people of faith we believe that is it truly His Body and Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

What is meant to be a sacred privilege can sadly just become another routine. Regrettably once the reception of Communion becomes simply a routine we can begin to receive the Eucharist improperly or sloppily.

In the United States, the ordinary way of receiving Holy Communion is to approach the Minister, acknowledge the sacredness of the Eucharist by a simple bow, and when the minister proclaims/says the "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ" the recipient responds "Amen" clearly and with conviction.

Those receiving Holy Communion have the choice of receiving the Eucharist either in their hands or having the priest or Minister place the Eucharist on their tongue. For those receiving in their hand, please extend your hands placing your right hand beneath the left. Then using the right hand the host should be immediately placed in the mouth and consumed. After having received in the hand or on the tongue, the traditional act of devotion is to bless oneself.

On weekdays members of the congregation have the opportunity to receive the Eucharist under both forms. To receive from the chalice one again approaches the minister, bows one's head, and when the Minister proclaims "The Blood of Christ," the recipient responds "Amen". Carefully grasp the chalice and take a small sip. The minister will then wipe the rim.

May we kindly ask that parents review with their children the proper way to receive communion.

Self intinction which is the act of the recipient dipping the host into the Precious Blood is not permitted. While communion by intinction is an ancient tradition, it is only permitted when administered by a priest, deacon or other designated minister.

A Word of Thanks

We thank you for joining our celebration of the Eucharist each Sunday and encourage you to honor God's house, to give good example to our young people, and to celebrate the Eucharist prayerfully and reverently.

Please pray for us, your priests. That we may continue to faithfully follow Our Lord, and in doing so may we always set a good example for you, the people entrusted to our care.

Together, we pray that God will continue to bless all of us and make Saint Joseph's a parish known for its vibrant, enthusiastic, joyful and most of all - prayerful liturgies!

Sincerely,

Fr. Peter McGeory
Fr. Stephen Ries

Fr. Dawson Ambosta
Fr. Augustine Badgley