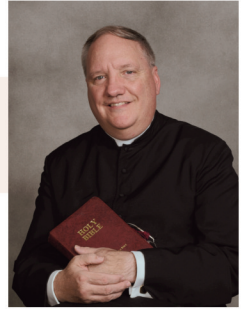




From the Pastor



October 4, 2026

Dearest Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

It's been an interesting couple of weeks. But then, a change of pastors often is. Some folks are welcoming, some are judging, and some leave. Those latter two always sadden me. People forget that change is difficult for priests to navigate too. People also forget that in a Church that has a third as many people coming to Mass as was the case 60 years ago, we shouldn't be surprised at having a third as many priests; and yet, we have the same number of churches. If not for the assistance of priests from Africa and India, we would have closed at least a third of our churches in this diocese nearly 30 years ago now. Many parishes have not contributed a native son to the priesthood in decades. So, we are where we are.

That being said, I need to bring a couple of urgent matters to your attention.

I generally "coast" for the first year in a parish, trying to get a grip on understanding the financial dynamics of the parish. Unfortunately, the month of September's receipts forces me to address our finances more immediately.

Over the first two months of the new fiscal year (July-August) our income was rather steady. In September we experienced a decline which, if not addressed, will be unsustainable for this parish's future. We would normally expect about \$90,000 to come in over the first quarter of our fiscal year; to date we have received \$71,000.

I recognize some people have left. I also recognize that some who remain are unhappy. But withholding support from your parish is not going to suddenly make things better, especially when the reasons for some of the changes made are beyond your or my control.

Some have expressed their unhappiness with the rotating celebrants. I explained to you that this was being done so we might have the time to look at our Mass schedule and have a full discussion about how to move forward before changes are made. I also explained that this situation would be of limited duration: one year.

Others have expressed their unhappiness with their inability to understand Fr. John. Honestly, I'm astounded that a university parish would be so unwelcoming and intolerant towards an international priest (or any international person for that matter). His last parish was sad to lose him! They came, over the years, to better understand him. What's more, they quickly came to understand what a kind and loving priest he is.

Next year we will be in a position to implement the plan we are developing this year. Until then, please be patient, and engage with your priests and our councils so we may continue the good work Newman parish has done for so many years.

"Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Trial, or distress, or persecutions, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? Yet in all this we are more than conquerors because of Him Who has loved us." (*Romans 8:35, 37*)

Fr. Michael

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On Living the Vocation to the Holiness

There are many things we do in our worship of God, especially in the context of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, which make people wonder: why do they do that? As I mentioned a few weeks ago, in the midst of Pope Leo's review of the Second Vatican Council's constitution on the sacred liturgy – *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, it is good for us to review these things periodically so that we can better know what we are doing and why. In this way we can enter more fully into the spirit of the liturgy.

Something that has come back in so many parishes is the use of bells and incense – “smells and bells”. Why? Both of these are things which elicit any number of reactions. For that reason, it is good to explain.

Bells are pretty simple. The use of bells marks a moment in which we need to be particularly attentive. Whether at Mass or adoration, the bells tell us to “LOOK”. And what are we looking at? In most cases, we are looking at Jesus, present to us in the most holy Eucharist. During adoration, the bells are rung as the people are being blessed by Jesus in the Eucharist (the “benediction”). During the Mass, the bells are rung at that moment in which the priest holds up the elements of the Eucharist which have just been consecrated, which he holds up in obedience to the rubrics of the Mass directing him to “show the people” the elements which are now the Body & Blood of Christ. Before the consecration, the bells ring while the priest is calling down the Holy Spirit on the bread and wine being offered. This is called the “*epiclesis*” and is another moment worthy of our particular attention.

Some might object with: “shouldn't we always be attentive?” Indeed, but we are human; and as such we have a tendency to wander. Thus, St. Elizabeth of Hungary writes of how she was called back to attentiveness to our precious Lord when the bells rang. Why? Because she had gotten distracted looking at her husband, Blessed Ludvig, whom she loved so much.

Others, through the years, have expressed appreciation for the use of bells as they too can get distracted, and are thus happy to be called back to attention. I even had a young person who is legally blind comment on how much the bells helped her to connect with what was happening in the Mass.

So, that is bells. Next week I will discuss the “smells” - incense. After that will come the postures we use during Mass, and then the subject of sacred music – which Pope Leo gave an entire catechesis on a few weeks ago.

