

## Spring Inspiration, A Season of Sacraments and Hope



Dear Parishioners,

Peace of Christ!

I last wrote to you just before Holy Week, and already we find ourselves in the middle of the Easter Season. It was a joy to celebrate the Triduum with so many of you. The liturgies of those days were just magnificent, culminating in the glorious Easter Vigil during which 18 of our parishioners became fully initiated into the Catholic Church. What a sign of hope!

These weeks mark a “season of sacraments”: this coming Sunday, May 2, four children in our Religious Education program will make their First Holy Communion. Two weeks later we will have the sacrament of confirmation. At the end of the month, on Saturday, May 29, Deacon Matthew Breslin will be ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal Dolan. I will have the honor of preaching the homily at Father Breslin’s first Mass the next day at his home parish, St. Augustine, in Highland, NY. Fr. Breslin will return to us on Sunday, June 13, to offer a Mass of Thanksgiving at 10:30am and to offer

first blessings to all those in attendance. Mark your calendars!

This time of year brings transition to many parishes. As you heard at Mass last weekend, Fr. Jason Smith has received a much-deserved promotion from his religious order, and will become the superior of their community in Detroit. This is a tribute to his many gifts and talents. Fr. Jason has served in the New York area for the past 15 years, and has touched so many lives here at the Basilica and beyond. I have been blessed to have him here as parochial vicar for the past two years, relying on his help and enjoying his friendship. Our meals together, with much laughter and easy conversation, have always brightened my day and I will miss his company very much indeed. Fr. Jason will offer a farewell Mass at 10:30am on Sunday, June 27, with a reception to follow. Please join us to thank Fr. Jason and wish him well in this new chapter. Our hope is that Cardinal Dolan will be assigning a priest to serve as parochial vicar here, and I will certainly let you know when that happens.

We also bid a fond farewell to Mr. Eric Roginek, who served as Coordinator of Religious Education this past year. Eric told me from the outset that he would likely be leaving after a year for further academic pursuits. Eric is an exceptionally talented young man who did a superb job leading our program this past year, especially as we made the important transition back to in-person learning. Thank you Eric for a job well done, and thank you to all the catechists and volunteers who make our program so successful.

The Easter season comes to a close on Pentecost Sunday, May 23. That will be our last Religious Education session for the year. It will also mark the end of our regular Sunday livestream. The livestream served an important role during the lockdown last year when people were not allowed to come to church, but it was never envisioned as a permanent fixture. We've been reopened for almost a year now, and the number of people who watch the Mass live has steadily decreased. That's a good sign, as it means more and more of you are returning to actual Mass. We plan to post various highlight clips, especially of our world-class schola, and we continue to maintain an active presence on social media to help everyone stay connected here. We hope most of all, though, to have you connected

with us at real Mass, in the Real Presence of Jesus, and to connect with fellow parishioners at our socials after the 7pm Mass. As Cardinal Dolan recently [wrote](#), "It's time to get back to Sunday Mass!" Yes, it's time to come back and to come home to the Lord.

It's good to see our neighborhood looking more like its old self: many more people out and about, dining, shopping, enjoying life. Springtime fills us with hope of new life, and how much we need that right now. Yes, sickness and even death will always be part of this fallen world, but our faith doesn't give them the last word. Jesus is risen and alive!

I look forward to seeing you at Mass and, together, growing closer to the Lord.

In Christ,  
Father Graebe