

Dear Parishioners of St. Lawrence,

I hope and pray that all of you are keeping safe and remaining healthy during these crazy times!

This upcoming Sunday, May 31st, is the official Solemnity of Pentecost, which is the Feast of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Virgin Mary and the Holy Apostles. It also marks the "birthday" of the Catholic Church, because when the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, descended upon Earth, a new era was born - the era of Christianity. The role of the Holy Spirit is to **sanctify**, or to make the whole world *holy*, which is why The Holy Spirit is referred to as the Divine Sanctifier; God The Holy Ghost Who brings to us the gift of holiness [as we know it].

During this pandemic, I (like all of you) have been so moved by watching people celebrate birthdays in a "drive-by" fashion - meaning that while we cannot celebrate birthdays in large groups without violating the social distance guidelines, we can *at least* drive by the homes of those celebrating another year of life through the honking of car horns and other such creative ways. It's so inspiring to see, but sad also because we cannot (or at least, should not) congregate in ways we're used to doing. The Birthday of the Catholic Church must be celebrated in an alternate way as well this year due to the fact that the State of New Jersey has not yet given us authorization to celebrate Sunday Mass with a congregation. However, the State has allowed us to open our church doors on Sundays for private worship, which is why I invite all of you to come to St. Lawrence for a few moments of prayer while observing physical distancing and wearing masks (of course), so that we can pay tribute to Our Supreme Lord and Savior.

Just a reminder that I do expose the Blessed Sacrament on the altar for adoration on Sundays, so if you feel safe enough to enter an enclosed building, I invite you to take a few brief moments to wish the Catholic Church a 'Happy Birthday' this Sunday. Again, I open the church between the hours of 8am and 12:30pm on Sundays so that you can have some access to the physical Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist situated on the altar.

Please know that I am very, very sensitive to the fact that these are very difficult times. I do not wish for this terrible virus to *ever* resurface, and nobody does! However, I am proud to have lived through this pandemic because I truly believe that it has brought out the best in us. I have personally witnessed people sacrifice, donate and display actions of selfless charity and generosity beyond measure. Sure, we all hear heartwarming stories about these wonderful things on the TV/internet news, but I see it with my own two eyes ... by whom? THE FRIENDS AND PARISHIONERS OF SAINT LAWRENCE CHURCH!!! When history is written years and years from now, it's probable that St. Lawrence Church in Weehawken, New Jersey will not be mentioned, and that's okay - all that matters is that God will remember, and in His Book of Life, the celestial company of Saints and Angels will be eternally gladdened by what they read about our faith community for what **you** did to support your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and what you did to bring much needed relief to those most in need.

The birthday of the Catholic Church is a birthday in which we all share, and YOU have given to Holy Mother Church the greatest gift ever - the gift of yourselves and that of your extraordinary example! I am so proud to be your Pastor and fellow parishioner! On a personal note, I have not seen my mother since March 9th (exactly) and I miss her dearly ... I have not been able to celebrate public Mass/worship with all of you since March 15th (also, exactly) and I miss you dearly. My mother is my biological family and you all are my church family - I miss ALL of you **just the same** ... whichever way you dissect it, family is family - and I can't wait to be with my CHURCH FAMILY (as well as my lovely mother, of course)!

My love and warmest personal wishes to all of you - may God bless you and may all of you feel the rich and warm embrace of His Son's Most Sacred Heart!

Love always,  
~Fr. Eric