

**THE SOLEMN MASS OF THANKSGIVING**

*on the*

**Retirement From Active Ministry**

*of*

*The Reverend Michael J. Piccola, V.F.*

**Saint Joseph Church**

---

**28 September 2025**



# SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS PARISH

## The Church of Saint Joseph

604 North Laurel Street

Post Office Box 2000

Hazleton, Pennsylvania 18201

OFFICE OF THE PASTOR

28 September 2025

*My Dear Parishioners and Friends,*

*WOW! Has time passed quickly since that Saturday morning of May 6, 1978, at Saint Peter's Cathedral in Scranton. A day I thought would never come, my retirement seemed so far away - now it is here! Much water has flowed under the dam over these forty-seven years. Whether in Parishes Communities, Classrooms, Principal's Office, the Pastor's Office (3 times) or administering God's healing love through the Sacraments of His love, especially in the Most Holy Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation while attending to the care of His physical Church and Sanctuary. "MY GOD, WHAT A LIFE, AND IT IS YOUR'S O PRIEST OF JESUS CHRIST." And yet, here we are, gathering to offer thanks to God for forty seven years of sharing in His gift of the Sacred Priesthood and sharing His love with His Holy People on my retirement from active ministry. It is with deep heartfelt gratitude that I offer my sincere thanks to you for joining with me today in offering thanks and gratitude to Almighty God and His loving Mother for all the Graces and Blessings bestowed upon me over these forty seven years to accomplish HIS work faithfully.*

*Every vocation to Religious Life is fostered and developed in the life of the home and a solid and faith filled Parish family. God has graced my sister Theresa and I with wonderful parents - Michael and Rose Piccola. They provided both of us with guidance and support in growing up as well as a solid love for God and His Church. Our faith was nurtured at Holy Rosary Church with God's love and Grace extend to us through the Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist. Words cannot express the sincere gratitude that Theresa and I feel for them and how deeply we miss their love and support in our lives. May they enjoy the reward of their labors in God's Kingdom. Their love continues in a unique way today. That is through my sister. I am grateful for her concern for me and for being there in good and challenging times, even though, at times, it may not seem to be appreciated. Theresa, thank you and may God Bless you always. That concern and love was always given and received throughout my life by my late Grandmother Theresa Cifunardi, my Aunt Catherine Hable and Uncle Carlo Piccola and my God-Mother Aunt Lucille Osawisch. I am most grateful also for the friendship of my loyal friends who have always been there on my journey.*

*Besides a loving and caring family, God has blessed me with a wonderful and caring mentor and, if you will, a true spiritual Father after the death of my Dad in 1972 Monsignor Arthur P. Ferrari. Father Ferrari came into my life when I was in the fifth grade. Beginning at that time, he worked with me in fostering my vocation to the Priesthood and provided me with all the skills necessary for successful and fruitful ministry, those things that cannot be taught in any Seminary classroom, from a love of caring for God's people through the celebration of the*

Sacraments, care and concern for brother Priests, mundane office and record keeping necessary in every Parish, to the meticulous care for the Church's physically and, especially the meticulous care of the Sanctuary and the prayerful and reverent celebration of the Sacraments, how honored and proud I was to have my spiritual Father vest me in Ordination to the Diaconate and Priesthood. A strange thing happened on the eve of Thanksgiving in 1965. I came home from Bishop O'Reilly High School for Thanksgiving. As always, I stopped to visit with Father, who at that time was suffering from cancer and at this time, was near death. We talked as usual. Finally in the middle of our conversation he had a request from me. I was asked to administer the last Sacraments of the Church to a dying friend and spiritual Father. With great trepidation and fighting back tears, it was accomplished. Something happened in that Rectory that night, a thing I will never forget. It was time for the spiritual son to become a spiritual father to a special person - the father was passing. From that night forward, celebrating the Sacraments was never the same again, the pure, sacred rituals and words that, as a Priest, I must celebrate and do. I now began to see them as they truly are, moments of prayer and Grace, for the sick and dying, the grieving, those that need God's healing love and forgiveness, a time for God's people to come closer to Him as He worked through me - His Priest. Given as he prepared to meet the Lord, my spiritual Father was teaching me an extremely important lesson. Father Art, thank you for making me who I am today a Priest of Jesus Christ. I hope you are proud of your spiritual son as he departs from his active ministry today.

To my brother Priests, both Diocesan and Religious, and Deacons. Thank you!

- ❖ To my classmates Father Hickey (Allentown), Monsignor Quinlan, V.G. (Harrisburg) and Father Bolmounter. We have shared the joys and trials of Seminary life at Saint Pius X and Mount Saint Mary's. We have discerned together, grieved together, and learned and studied together. We thought, in those days, retirement would never come. It has, for two of us. However, with God's help, our friendship did not end on Ordination Day in 1968. No, it continued all these years as we took on the responsibility entrusted to us by God at Ordination.
- ❖ To my brother Priest and Deacons of the Hazelton Deanery. It has been my pleasure to work and serve with you in our Deanery, not only as a pastor, but as your Dean for the past fourteen years. Thank you for your support and your constant help. We have certainly accomplished much in this time of change and trial in our area.
- ❖ To my Religious brothers, the Passionist and the Oblates of Saint Joseph. Thank you for opening the doors of your house to me and welcoming me as one of your own. I am humbled and grateful. Father Richard, C.P. and brothers on the hill in Scranton, where would I be without you today? Your weekend help for years has been immeasurable. Your kindness to me during my illness in 2021 by filling in for me while I was recovering, was truly a blessing. Father Richard, it was your prodding, always gentle and kind, which pushed me to return, without fear, to the work God called me to do. I will indeed miss our gathering on Saturday evening and Sunday mornings around the kitchen table for something to eat, tea or coffee and great discussion - theological, spiritual direction (when needed) and otherwise.
- ❖ To Father Paul McDonnell and the Oblates, thank you. You were my help in West Pittston and Harding, and continued that help here in Hazelton. Aside from our work together, I shared many meals with you, retreats, and time away. Your door was always open to me. Father Paul, a loyal friend and confidant, we shared much together, good times and even tough times. I will never forget walking the road of ill health with you in 2021 knowing that you walked the road before me and gave me great support and encouragement.



*It is my prayer today that those doors will always remain open. In retirement, I plan on using them frequently.*

On the day after Memorial Day in 2010, I received the call from Scranton that no Priest is ever happy to receive. It was to inform me that Bishop Bambura was asking me to assume a new assignment as Pastor of Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish, at Saint Joseph Church in Hazleton. The profile of the parish was shared and the scope of the work discussed. Still in shock and with hesitation and great trepidation, I agreed to pray and think about the assignment. Much discussion with the Bishop followed. Finally, with hesitation, like all my other priestly assignments and with the obedience to the Bishop promised at my Ordination, I agreed to assume this new appointment. On July 10, 2010 it began. Over these fourteen years, as with everything, there have been moments of trial and tribulation as well as moments of boundless joy. There is an old saying that the Shepherd is only as effective as the sheep who follow him. Isn't this the truth? With your support, generosity, kindness and understanding much, even more than I ever expected, has been accomplished during these years: repairs to a deteriorating Church building, new sidewalks, new furnace, partial repairs to the air conditioning system, an addition of a parking lot while repairing those that existed and were in dire need of repair, the blending of four individual parishes in one, the repainting of our Church, and much, much more. In retrospect, I take this opportunity to offer my sincere gratitude and thanks to all who were there in all those times of need: my faithful Devotion Kassick and Kustic, the Parish staff, our Parish Societies for all their hard work in helping keep our parish solvent and current in all financial responsibilities, to those who provided guidance and support in financial and structural matters and last, but certainly not least, to all my beloved parishioners for your support and generosity. You made it possible to accomplish all this and much more. You never let your Shepherd down. **THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART.** The decision I reached in the Spring of 2010 with great trepidation was the right one and, with the help of God, it is my hope, that I can depart from you as a stronger parish community who is more in love with the Lord and His beloved Bride, the Church. If so, my time among you was immensely successful.

In closing, I ask for your prayers as I begin this new chapter in my priestly life - my retirement from active ministry. Please pray that God and Our Blessed Lady, the Mother of all Priests, in their kindness and love, will grant me the health needed so that I can continue to do the work that I have loved for forty seven years.

MY GOD WHAT A LIFE  
(IT HAS BEEN)  
AND IT IS YOUR'S  
O PRIEST OF JESUS CHRIST!

Asking God to bless you and keep you always in His love, I remain,

Most thankfully,

*Rev. Gene J. Pich, Jr.*

**PRELUDE:**

**DEACON LEONARD KASSICK**

**JESU BAMBINO**

**O HOLY NIGHT**

**TO GOD BE THE GLORY**

### **ORDER OF WORSHIP**

**GATHERING SONG:**

**I WILL GO UP TO THE ALTAR OF GOD**

(Words and Music by Ephrem Feeley)

**GLORIA: All Sing**

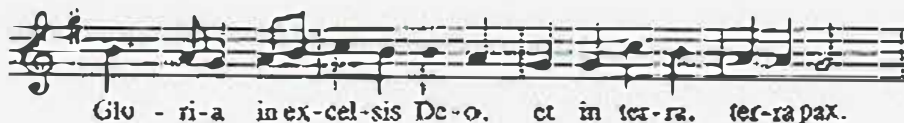
(New Mass for John Carroll by Michael Joncas)

### **GLORIA**

Michael Joncas

**Refrain**

*Cantor first time, then All*



**FIRST READING:**

**Peyton Frye**

**Amos 6:1a, 4-7**

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM:**

**Psalm 146:7, 8-9, 9-10**

**SECOND READING:**

**Peyton Frye**

**1 Timothy 6:11-16**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:**

**Celtic Alleluia**

**GOSPEL:**

**Luke 16:19-31**

**HOMILY:**

**Reverend Paul McDonnell**

**PRESENTATION OF GIFTS:**

**TAKE, LORD, RECEIVE** (John Foley, SJ)

**TAKE, LORD, RECEIVE**

John Foley, SJ  
Arr. Jeanne Carter

Give me on - ly your love and your  
grace: that's e - nough for me.  
Your love and your grace  
are e - nough for me.

Copyright © 1975, & in Arr. © 2017, John D. Foley, SJ, and UCCW  
5556 NE Hemlock, Portland, OR 97213. All rights reserved. Used with permission.  
This arrangement published in 2017 by GIA Publications, Inc.

**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY:**

(Mass of Creation – Marty Haugen)

**MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION:**

(Mass of Creation – Marty Haugen)

**GREAT AMEN:**

(Mass of Creation – Marty Haugen)

**OUR FATHER:**

(Words and Music by Marie Jo Thum)

**LAMB OF GOD:**

(Mass of Creation – Marty Haugen)

**COMMUNION:**

**NO GREATER LOVE #153** (Missalette)

**ONLY IN GOD** by John Michael Talbot

## Only in God

Verses

1. On - ly in God is my rock at rest, in  
 2. On - ly in God is found safe - ty when my

Him comes my sal - va - tion,  
 in Him comes my sal - va - tion.

He, On - ly in God is my rock, my  
 in found glo - ry when

and my sal - va - tion,  
 we trust work and trust in low - ly.

Refrain

My strength, bold, my Sav - ior, I shall not be a -  
 fraid at all. My strength - hood, my Sav - ior,

I shall not be moved, moved. On - ly in God is my  
 rest at rest, in Him comes my sal - va - tion.

First Verse as Printed by John Michael Talbot, 1954  
 Music by John Michael Talbot, 1954  
 © 1980, Scripture Music / 1980 Songs, ed. by Capital CMSS Publishing

**COMMUNION MEDITATION:**

**AVE MARIA** by Schubert

**REMARKS ON BEHALF OF PARISH:** Mr. John Nonnemacher, C.P.A.

**RECESSIONAL HYMN:**

**O GOD BEYOND ALL PRAISING #532** (Missalette)

(by Michael Perry)

**WITH DEEP APPRECIATION TO THE FOLLOWING**

<b>PRINCIPAL CELEBRANT</b>	<b>REVEREND MICHAEL J. PICCOLA V.F.</b>
<b>LITURGICAL ASSISTANT</b>	<b>PEYTON FRYE</b>
<b>PRINCIPAL CON-CELEBRANTS</b>	<b>REV. MSGR EDWARD QUINLAN, V.G.</b>
	<b>VERY REV. EUGENE RITZ, V.E.</b>
	<b>REV. PAUL MCDONNELL, O.S.J</b>
	<b>REV. JOHN HILFERTY, M.A.</b>
	<b>REV. RICHARD POLMOUNTER, M.S.</b>
<b>CON-CELEBRANTS</b>	<b>HAZLETON DEANERY AND INVITED PRIEST</b>
<b>DEACON OF THE WORD</b>	<b>DEACON VINCE OBERTO</b>
<b>DEACON OF THE EUCHARIST</b>	<b>DEACON THOMAS KOSTIC</b>
<b>MASTER OF CEREMONIES</b>	<b>DEACON ROBERT ROMAN</b>
<b>LECTOR</b>	<b>PEYTON FRYE</b>
<b>SERVERS</b>	<b>ST. JOSEPH CHURCH</b>
<b>CHOIR DIRECTOR</b>	<b>JOHN SIMKOVICH</b>
<b>ORGANISTS</b>	<b>JOHN TOMSHO</b>
	<b>JOHN GASPER</b>
<b>FOLK GROUP MEMBERS</b>	<b>BILL AND CATHY GETZ</b>
	<b>BRIAN VALENTINE</b>
<b>TRUMPET</b>	<b>FRANK BALON</b>
<b>VIOLIN</b>	<b>GAVIN MACALARNEY</b>
<b>VOCALIST</b>	<b>DEACON LEONARD KASSICK</b>
	<b>JACK JAMES</b>
	<b>MEMBERS OF HOLY ROSARY CHOIR</b>





To live in the midst of the world  
without desiring its pleasures;  
To be a member of each family,  
yet belong to none;  
To share all sufferings;  
To penetrate all secrets;  
To heal all wounds;  
To go from men to God  
and offer Him their prayers;  
To return from God to men  
to bring pardon and hope;  
To have a heart of fire for Charity,  
and a heart of bronze for Chastity;  
To teach and to pardon,  
console and bless always.  
My God, what a life; and it is yours,  
O priest of Jesus Christ.

— Jean-Baptiste Henri Lacordaire, O.P. (1802-1861)