Peace and Goodness: A Pastoral Letter

Solemnity of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

November 2026

Dear Parishioners of Holy Family,

Over the past several months, I have felt increasingly drawn to write to you more regularly throughout the year. For many years, I have always appreciated the opening greetings of St. Paul's letters, particularly the warmth with which he addresses the Christian communities he served. His introductions were more than simple greetings; they expressed his affection for the people, his gratitude for their faith, and his desire to encourage them in their relationship with Christ. It seems evident that his shared words reflected what he experienced in his heart for these communities.

I would like to offer something similar here at Holy Family. My hope is to write several times throughout the year, not simply to provide updates about parish activities, but to share reflections, offer encouragement, and invite us to consider how the Lord is working in our lives. I have spoken with our Parish Council about this idea, and they have encouraged me to move forward. I hope these occasional letters will become another way for us to grow together as a community of faith.

This desire also connects with an important part of our parish's ongoing strategic plan and core values: Holy Family as a "welcoming home", seeking encounters with Jesus Christ, engaging in Eucharistic Worship, all with the desire of inspiring sanctity. In the months ahead, we will be placing greater emphasis on Christian spirituality and prayer. Over the past several years, I have had many conversations with parishioners who desire to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ, deepen their prayer lives, and discover more fully the richness of our Catholic spiritual tradition. I see this spiritual thirsting in my own life, and I desire that our community would have more intentional opportunities for reflection, gathering in community, witnesses and presentations, speakers, parish resources, and practical ways to develop a deeper life of prayer that will be offered over the next year.

The Season of Advent: Making Room for Christ

As we approach Advent, we enter a season that is fundamentally about expectation and anticipation. St. Bernard of Clairvaux describes three ways in which we anticipate Christ: we remember His first coming into the world at Bethlehem; we look forward to His return in glory at the end of time; and, in the present, we recognize that Christ desires to come and dwell within each of us.[1]

That third movement of Advent may be the most personally challenging. We are invited to ask ourselves: Do I truly want Christ to take flesh in my life?

Welcoming Christ is more than remembering a beautiful story or celebrating familiar traditions. It means allowing the Gospel to shape our decisions, our relationships, our priorities, and the way we treat others. It means Jesus Christ is One with whom we dialogue throughout the day. It means becoming attentive to the poor, forgiving those who have hurt us, and allowing the teachings of Jesus to become the central influence in our lives. Advent invites us to examine those places where we have not yet welcomed Christ, where we have held something back, or where we need His presence most.

This Advent, the priests of Holy Family will be sharing a series of brief reflections through our parish social media. Each week, we will reflect on the Scripture readings for the coming Sunday and share some

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[1]This famous excerpt on the three comings of the Lord Jesus Christ is taken from a sermon by St. Bernard of Clairvaux (Sermo 5, In Adventu Domini, 1-3: Opera Omnia, Edit. Cisterc. 4 {1966}, 188-190. It appears in the Roman Office of Readings for Wednesday of the First Week of Advent.

personal thoughts about how those readings speak to our lives and our parish community. I encourage you to look for these videos on our Holy Family Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube pages.

Liturgical Updates: Growing in Our Worship

Over the past year, we have made a concerted effort to deepen our understanding of the Mass and the way we worship. Through "teaching Masses", presentations, book studies, and other opportunities for liturgical formation, we have explored the meaning behind many of the gestures, prayers, and traditions that make Catholic worship so rich. I am grateful to everyone who has participated and to those who have helped make these opportunities possible.

There are a few additional liturgical practices I would like to bring to your attention. First, we will be returning to the regular practice of commissioning our Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who bring the Blessed Sacrament to the sick and homebound. At the conclusion of the Communion Rite at Sunday Masses, those ministers who will be visiting parishioners will come forward to receive the Eucharist from the priest or deacon and receive a brief blessing before going out to serve. This practice follows the Church's liturgical directives for sending out Eucharistic ministers and visibly reminds us that the Eucharist we celebrate is meant to strengthen and unite the entire community, including those unable to join us in church. I am deeply grateful to the many ministers who faithfully visit our homebound parishioners, residents of nursing facilities, and those recovering from illness or surgery.

We are also continuing to strengthen our altar server ministry. I am grateful to Fr. Jon, Kathy Ott, Elizabeth Grayson (Director of Catholic Identity for Holy Family School), and Jake Cermak (summer seminarian intern) and all those who have helped train and encourage our servers. Their presence and reverence at the altar are a blessing to our parish. As part of their continued formation, some of our more experienced servers are learning to assist with the use of incense and the ringing of consecration bells.

Both practices help us enter more deeply into the mystery of the Mass. Much like the tangible postures or gestures we practice at Mass (bowing, kneeling, etc.), or even the sounds of our carillon (bell) system, what is heard and seen can be a vehicle of remembrance, calling our hearts and minds to prayer, attentiveness, or deeper participation. Incense is a visible and fragrant sign of reverence, reminding us that our prayers rise before God.[2] The consecration bells, which we will reintroduce at the elevations during the Eucharistic Prayer, provide an audible reminder of the sacred moment taking place before us: Christ becoming truly present in the Eucharist.[3] These signs engage our senses and help call our minds and hearts to prayer. Beginning in Advent we will introduce a more frequent use of incense as well as the introduction of consecration bells for Sunday celebrations and Solemnities.

Parish Grounds and the Lower Church Hall

You may have noticed a few changes around our parish grounds. Three maple trees along the north side of the rectory have been removed. After consultation with parishioners and our maintenance team, we determined that removing the trees was the most prudent course of action. They had begun to thin and show signs of decline, and we wanted to prevent any potential problems with their roots and the rectory foundation. I am grateful to those who helped assess the situation and make this decision.

There are parishioners who have generously donated and planted flowers throughout the various seasons, as well as cared for them from the spring through the fall months. I am grateful that members of our community have kept our parish grounds in mind, offering their time and talent to beautify it through their generosity. I also want to thank our maintenance staff and those who help care for our grounds throughout the year. Their work, most recently being the removal of autumn leaves, often goes unnoticed, but it contributes greatly to the beauty and welcoming appearance of our parish. Also, as we anticipate

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[2] See the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 276; "*Thurification or incensation is an expression of reverence and of prayer, as is signified in Sacred Scripture (cf. Ps 141 [140]:2, Rev 8:3)*".

[3] See the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 150; "*A little before the consecration, when appropriate, a server rings a bell as a signal to the faithful. According to local custom, the server also rings the bell as the priest shows the host and then the chalice.*"

the colder weather, they are prepared for snow removal for our parking lots and sidewalks.

One of the most significant improvements has been the completion of our Lower Church Hall renovation. Over the past year, we have updated the space with a new ceiling, flooring, decorative walls, televisions, painting, and an improved sound system. The hall was completed in late summer and has already served as the setting for numerous parish and school gatherings, including our 80th Anniversary reception, school events, the kindergarten Thanksgiving celebration, and the recent Craft Fair. This is an important gathering place for our community, and I am grateful to the parishioners and families whose generosity assisted with additional monies to make these improvements more affordable. I am so proud when visitors come into the lower church hall for various events and remark on the warmth of the space; I am grateful we have an even more beautiful and functional space to welcome parishioners and others into.

Called to Flourish: Our Diocesan Capital Campaign

Finally, I want to introduce an important effort that will be taking place throughout the Diocese of Cleveland and here at Holy Family. Our Diocesan capital campaign, *Called to Flourish*, has been up and running within the diocese for about the last year. Bishop Malesic has identified three important areas of focus for our diocesan Church: worship, evangelization, and service. These priorities, outlined in his pastoral letter *A Flourishing Apostolic Church*, provide the foundation for this campaign. The funds raised will support initiatives throughout the Diocese while also providing resources for all parishes in the diocese.

There are five total "waves", each consisting of a group of parishes that will enter this campaign at staggered times from 2025-2028. Holy Family is in wave 2 (the third of five groups, with the first wave being a group of pilot parishes), and we will join approximately thirty other parishes participating in this phase of the campaign. Although planning stages have been happening for the last six months for myself, our parish staff, and members of the Parish and Finance Councils, we will start the public phase of the campaign in January, 2027.

Holy Family is a wonderfully generous parish - generous to the operational and ministerial efforts we have, generous through charitable outreach and remembrance of the poor, and generous in personal time and efforts - and I am grateful for the many and varied ways you already support our community. As the initial portions of this campaign begin I will offer additional meetings and communication about this important undertaking.

From One Liturgical Year to the Next

As we conclude the liturgical year with the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, we are reminded that all creation finds its purpose and fulfillment in Christ. He is the Word through whom all things were made, the One who entered our world in the flesh, and the King who will bring all things to their final fulfillment. Advent then invites us to renew our longing for His coming and to prepare our hearts to welcome Him.

My prayer is that this season will be a time of genuine spiritual renewal for all of us. May we make room for Christ in our homes, our relationships, our decisions, and especially in our prayer. Thank you for the many ways you make Holy Family a community of faith, generosity, and welcome. It is a privilege to serve as your pastor, and I look forward to all that the Lord has in store for us in the months ahead.

Peace and Goodness,

Fr. Michael P. McCauley

Fr. Michael

1/2026