Instead of the quiet hum of people gathering, Old St. Joseph’s is now empty and silent at 9:20 on Sunday morning. An audio recorder is plugged into the sound system to capture the few voices that will be edited and uploaded to our website in an hour or so. When I stand at the ambo, I have to imagine that I am welcoming our visitors and the familiar faces that are missing from their accustomed places. Sundays have changed a lot since March 15, the last day a public Mass was celebrated at Old St. Joseph’s.

Like many people, I wonder how these changes are affecting us, how our present experience is shaping our future as a church. In particular, I wonder how the changes in how we are celebrating the Eucharist during this pandemic might be changing our understanding of the Eucharist we celebrate.

What are we missing right now? Well, obviously, we miss each other’s physical presence: hands to grasp, and eyes to catch, smiles to return. There is some skin-hunger in this for sure, but it is also a deep longing of faith to be present in and to the human flesh that God called good at its creation and took on in Jesus in order to redeem us.

Presence, especially ‘real presence,’ is one of the ways that Catholics talk about the Eucharist. There are, of course, many ways that we talk about the Eucharist, all of them metaphors and all of them true, each offering a different insight to this mystery that is the source and summit of our life as a faith community. To speak of ‘real presence’ emphasizes that Jesus Christ is really and truly present in the sacrament we celebrate. His real presence is not confined to any single element of our celebration. Christ is present in the Word of God, preached and proclaimed. Christ is present in the presider, who visibly unites us with the church throughout the world and time. Christ is present in the bread and wine that is blessed and shared, and Christ is present in the community that gathers together and is transformed by the Eucharist we celebrate. This expansive understanding of Christ’s presence is one of the first gifts of Vatican II, in its document on the sacred liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium 7).

Transformation is another way that Catholics talk about the Eucharist. The bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ; the Eucharist transforms the lives of the people who receive it. A beautiful old saying, which I believe is attributed to St. Augustine, captures this image: Behold the body of Christ; become what you receive. Our Sunday Eucharists are a school of transformation for people of faith. They are rituals in which we learn and practice the experience of transformation that we can then carry out into our lives, an experience that the wider world sorely needs.

—continued on next page
While Old St. Joseph’s is closed to gathering publicly for worship, we can still read the scriptures, and thanks to the internet, we can hear (or read) them preached from many perspectives. We still share meals at home (perhaps more meals than we are used to sharing), and these meals can remind us of the many times Jesus sat down to eat with those he called friends. Another gift of technology is our ability to stay in touch with the many communities to which we belong, and even with the pastor of our parish. We can still try to transform the lives of the vulnerable and poor through the charities and policies that we support.

We can recognize Christ’s presence in all of these experiences, the presence that reaches into all aspects of our lives. But still, I suspect that we all long to bring our community, the Word of God, our pastors and the bread and wine together in our church. There’s still something missing, a fullness that we still hunger for.

When we cannot actively take part in the Eucharist, when we cannot touch each other, or hold and eat the bread and wine, how much is it like watching a cooking show on cable instead of preparing a meal with family and friends? If we only watch or hear the Eucharistic prayer, will the Mass become a spectacle to watch instead of a powerful ritual that we participate in? There have long been ‘radio Masses’ and Mass on TV that have consoled people who are homebound and connected them to the wider community’s celebrations in church. The grace of Christ’s presence is not constrained by the airwaves or the internet. But now, when the only way we can experience the Eucharist is by livestream and recordings, will we tend to understand the Eucharist as an object that we long to receive instead of a powerful relationship that changes us and enables us to change the world?

The COVID-19 pandemic is changing us, and change is nothing new to people of faith. We have been on the move, from Egypt to a land promised by God, from exile to return and rebuilding, from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, from death to life, from an upper room to the ends of the earth. As we move and change, we can also grow in faith, in our relationship with God and our understanding of the life to which we are called. I pray that we will continue to grow too, in our understanding of the Eucharist that we share. It is too soon to fully understand how our pandemic experience is changing us, but it is not too soon to pay attention to questions that arise as we move forward in faith.

In your prayers, please remember our sick and homebound brothers and sisters, our ministry at Pennsylvania Hospital and all those who have asked for our prayers.


Updating Our Parish Prayer List

It’s been a while since we’ve updated our parish prayer list. If you wish to have someone included on the list, please call BJ Brown at 215-923-1733 or email bjbrown@oldstjoseph.org. The updated list will appear in the May 24 bulletin.
Announcements

Laudato Sí Week, May 16-24

It is the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis’s encyclical letter on care of our common home, Laudato Sí. Pope Francis has invited the global church to mark the occasion with a week of prayer, study and action—see laudatosi.org for more information. Other resources for prayer and study are available from The Catholic Climate Covenant (catholicclimatecovenant.org) and its Catholic Climate Project, (catholicclimateproject.org).

Vote by Mail

Catholics approach voting as a civic and moral responsibility. Prepare for the Pennsylvania’s June 2 primary election today by signing up to vote safely by mail. Visit www.votespa.com for directions on registering to vote and on requesting a mail ballot. You can also get a paper application to vote by mail by calling the PA Department of State at 1-877-868-3772. Monday, May 18 is the deadline for voter registration; Tuesday, May 26 is the deadline for applying for a mail-in ballot.

Hunger and Housing Assistance

Visit philadelphia.gov/food/#/ for information on free food and meal sites during the COVID-19 epidemic. The site includes information about student and senior meals. The city has also launched a COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance program. Visit phlrentassist.org for information and to apply. Finally, the Familis First Coronavirus Response Act authorized a new benefit called Pandemic EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) to help families with children who are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. Search “just harvest” and P-EBT for more information on how to apply.

Stay in Touch

Although our church building remains closed, Old St. Joseph’s parish staff remains available to you during office hours. You can reach any staff member at 215-923-1733. Emails are listed on the next page of this bulletin and on our website, oldstjoseph.org—where you can still find daily reflections posted at noon on Monday-Saturday. In addition, keep an eye on our Facebook page (@OSJ19106) for more frequent updates and links to opportunities for prayer and action during the pandemic.
INFORMATION

Pastor
Fr. Walter Modrys SJ (pastor@oldstjoseph.org)

Parochial Vicar
Fr. Francis Hannafey SJ (fhannafey@oldstjoseph.org)

In Residence
Br. Robert Carson SJ
Fr. Ed O’Donnell SJ (eodonnell@oldstjoseph.org)

Pastoral Associate
BJ Brown (bjbrown@oldstjoseph.org)

Business Manager
Eric German (germane@oldstjoseph.org)

Director of Music
Mark Bani (music@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Offices
(ooldstjoseph.org)

Religious Education (PREP) Coordinator
Christine Szczepanowski (prep@oldstjoseph.org)

Faith, Food & Friends Director
Deborah Hluchan (faithandfriends@oldstjoseph.org)

Director of Hospital Ministry
Tom Volkert (hospitalEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Rectory Office Hours
Monday through Friday: 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM
Sunday: 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Mass Times
Monday through Saturday: 12:05 PM
Saturday Vigil Mass for Sunday: 5:30 PM
Sunday: 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 AM and 6:30 PM
Holy Days: 12:05 and 7:00 PM

Medical Emergency
In a medical emergency when the need for a priest is urgent, please call the rectory.

Hearing Enhancements
Old St. Joseph’s is equipped with an audio hearing loop. Switch on the T-coil function of your device to use the loop. Booklets with the Sunday readings are available in the rear of the church.

Registration
Registration forms are available in the rectory office during normal office hours, on the bookcases in the back of the church and online at www.oldstjoseph.org. They can be returned to the parish office by mail or in person.

Sacrament of Reconciliation
A priest is available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation Monday through Saturday from 11:30 AM–12:00 PM or by appointment.

Sacrament of Baptism
If you want to arrange a baptism, please contact Fr. Hannafey (fhannafey@oldstjoseph.org) at least two months before the desired date.

Eucharist for the Homebound
To arrange to receive Communion at home, please contact the parish offices.

The Sacrament of Anointing
The Sacrament of Anointing (the sacrament of the sick) is offered during the 12:05 PM Mass on the first Saturday of each month. Homebound or hospitalized persons wanting to receive the Sacrament of Anointing should call the parish office.

Sacrament of Matrimony
If you want to be married at Old St. Joseph’s, please visit our website, oldstjoseph.org and read the material under the heading Weddings. Please call the parish office at 215-923-1766 at least nine months before your desired wedding date.

Rite of Christian Initiation
If you are an adult wishing to be baptized, or to receive First Eucharist and Confirmation, or are a baptized non-Catholic seeking full communion with Catholic Church, please call the parish office or email rcia@oldstjoseph.org.

Mass of Christian Burial
To schedule a funeral or memorial Mass, ask your funeral director to call the parish office.

Parish Pastoral Council
(osjpc@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Finance Council
Paul Shay, chair

Historic Preservation Corporation Board
Fr. Walter Modrys SJ, president

Adult Education
Rita O’Brien and Jeanmarie Zippo (adulted@oldstjoseph.org)

Eldership
Pat Nelson (eldership@oldstjoseph.org)

Parish Life
Joe Casey (parishlife@oldstjoseph.org)

Ignatian Spirituality and Formation
Len Mancini (osjspirituality@oldstjoseph.org)

Women, Faith and Fellowship
Rana McNamara (wff@oldstjoseph.org)

Young Adult Community
(osjyac@gmail.com)

Altar Servers
Maria Ramirez (altarserver@oldstjoseph.org)

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
Bill Stewart (EM@oldstjoseph.org)

Hospital Ministry
Luanne Balestrucci (hospitalEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Homebound Ministry
Neal Hébert (homeEM@oldstjoseph.org)

Lectors
Lou Anne Bulik (lectors@oldstjoseph.org)

Ushers
Nikola Sizgorich (ushers@oldstjoseph.org)

Children’s Liturgy of the Word
Peggy Connolly (clow@oldstjoseph.org)
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