



Church of the
Holy Family

PARISH
UPDATE

Fr. Joe Krupp

June 2021

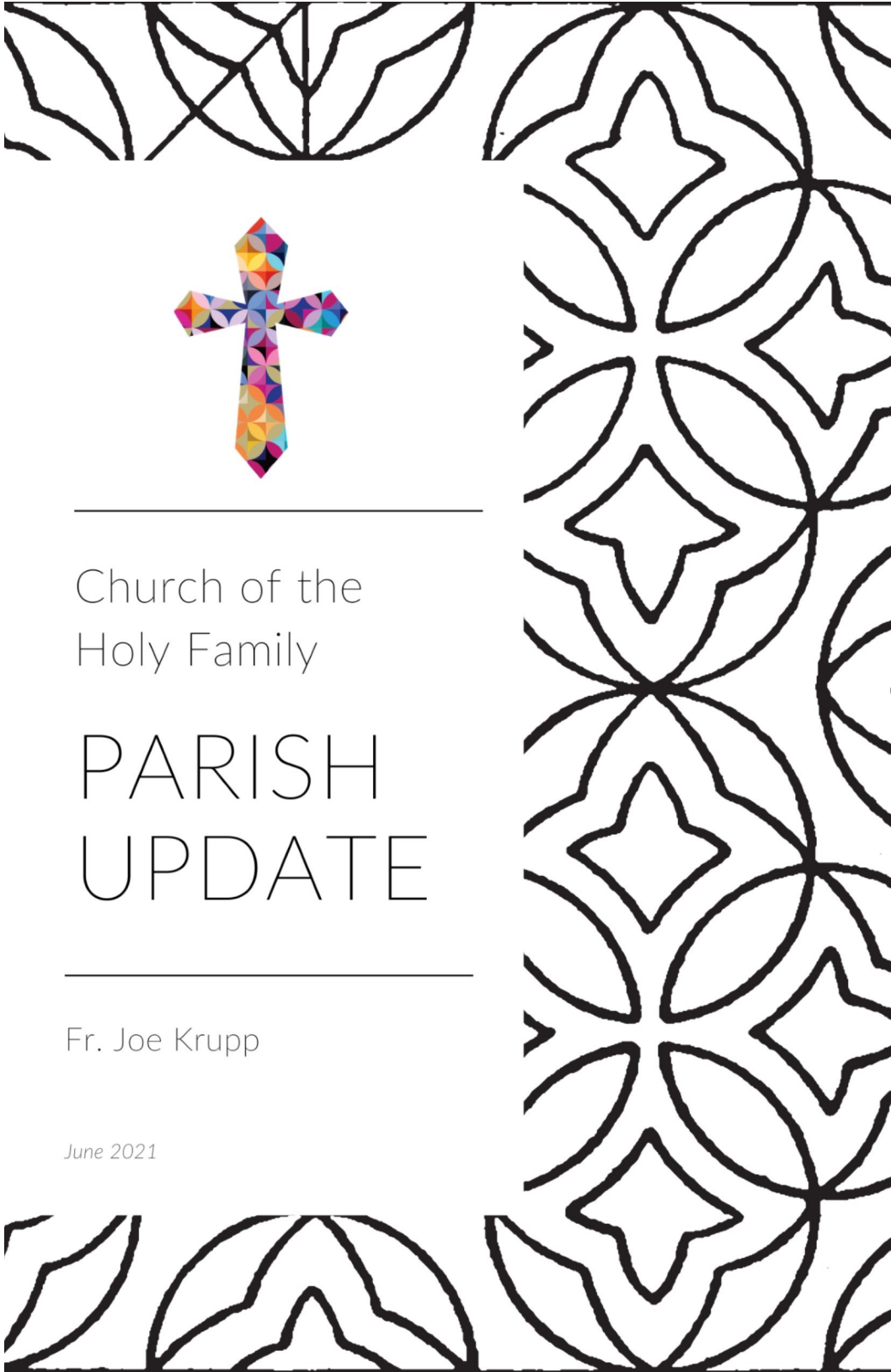




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Update ONE

Greetings in Christ, all!

I've been wanting for some time to create a fairly significant update for you all. Things have changed so very radically in the last year and couple months that I think we all feel a little behind. Beyond that, we have experienced a significant influx of new parishioners and have, because of Virus restrictions, lacked the means to catch everyone up.

It is my sincerest hope that you all read these updates and share them with others, especially people who might not be in a position to get these articles. That would help so much.

So, what I'll do is backup a year or so and set the stage for how our parish responded to the Quarantine and how that has changed things in and for our Church.

Once Quarantine hit, we sprang into action. One of my favorite memories of this time was the last night before the Quarantine hit: cars lined up around the block to receive God's Mercy and Exorcised Salt and Water. I don't know if you realize this, but we "made" almost 200 gallons and gave most of it away that night. I don't think any of us understood just what the situation would evolve into, heck, this was the "15 Days to Flatten the Curve" stage of the Quarantine. The craziest part of this all is that we had begun live streaming masses three weeks before any of this happened. We were testing out an idea for taking care of our elderly parishioners through live streamed masses and then suddenly, the Virus popped up and it moved from experiment to live reality. God is so good to us: He proved to be ten steps ahead.

Once the Quarantine dragged on, I began hearing from so many of you who were lonely, scared, lost...I felt the Lord tell me that I needed to encourage people prayerfully. So, we set up an online ministry: a short reflection each morning to remind us that Jesus is with us and a daily "show" starting at noon where anyone who was lonely or scared could tune in and find company and growth in the faith.

We simply were not ready for how beautifully and massively this would turn out to be.

Almost immediately, we began receiving beautiful letters from people all over the country and even the world. We were getting thousands of viewers for the show and thousands of people praying mass with us. It was and is amazing. With those letters, we also received gifts. Donations and help. It was absolutely astounding, because we never asked, but people literally began sending money to help us from all over the world.

This led us to create Joe In Black Ministries, a non profit organization created to raise money for our building and grounds, as well as our kids' tuition costs. The simple reason we created it was so that I could send any gifts I received on to the Church. At this point, we were still pretty sure we would incur some massive debt as we were building and I'm always conscious of our school,

hoping that one day we can build a massive fund to lessen tuition.

So, we worked with lawyers and other such people and ended up creating a non profit to help us get equipment to broadcast and to help us raise money for our Church.

We felt called by God to process through the streets and neighborhoods of Grand Blanc with The Blessed Sacrament. During the first six months of Quarantine, we walked dozens and dozens of miles, taking Christ with us, blessing homes, blessing people, reminding everyone that they are not alone, that they need not be afraid, that Christ was with them and the Holy Family was there on His behalf.

We did Last Rites through nursing home windows, sometimes using a step ladder and a bull horn. We reached out through phone calls to as many parishioners as we could. We sent letters and cards to people and found new and unique ways to minister. God is so very good to us... he filled us with energy and new ideas and the response has been unbelievable.

I pray that you feel the joy of the Lord in this report. I am so blessed by your hunger for God and your desire for this parish family to be a City on the Hill; one that does not hide its love for God or its desire to serve.

In the end, by God's Grace, we emerged from this crisis stronger than we ever could've hoped. God's Holy Spirit and your hard work and sacrifice have brought about a couple miracles:

If everyone stays faithful to the pledges they made to Witness to Hope and Restore the Temple, we will have no debt for the Church. None. To be clear, we were anticipating a debt somewhere between \$300,000-\$800,000 upon completion of the Church. Now, it appears we won't have any.

We now have a large and active "virtual parish": namely, a group of people from other countries and states who pray with us online and support us financially. Our registrations for the parish are up, our school is thriving because of the hard work of the employees and the commitment of our parents.

We have no debt of any kind: the six digit debt we had to the MCC is gone. I was able to create a non profit that will benefit our Church and School. All of these things and more. I just can't wrap my heart around it.

I will follow this letter up with a series of updates about all the goings on and changes in our parish, as well as our future plans. The next update will be about our masses and how all of our various ministries will emerge in our new parish.

I'm so very, terribly grateful to God that I get to be your priest.

All of my love and prayers.
Fjk

Update TWO

Last week, I gave a general update about the things happening in our parish since the quarantine began.

This update will look at our liturgy and the first thing we will look at is our servers, Eucharistic ministers, ushers, etc.

This part of the update won't really make a ton of sense unless I give you a bit of background, please stick with me.

At the beginning of my second year here, our liturgist and I began meeting to create an Acolyte Program for our parish. The idea we had was to intensively train a group of people in Liturgy; two people for each ministry within our mass: lectors, servers, ushers, Eucharistic Ministers, etc..

Once these people were trained, they would be made Acolytes by Bishop Earl and they would then basically take over training all ministers at mass. All this was to help us enhance the dignity, reverence and joy of our Masses and take the heat off any one person/employee/volunteer to coordinate, train and schedule this massive effort.

We had a roll out plan that basically collapsed shortly after the Quarantine was called by the State. It was our plan to walk people through the program, what we were doing, why we were doing it, etc., and begin having the acolytes train people in these ministries, but the State did not allow us to do any of that. What the State did allow at this point was for us to pick 10 people and submit their names as people who would be able to travel to the church to help with religious gatherings each day.

How this was perfect for us was it allowed us to simply take the ten men we had been training and plug them in, submitting their names to the state for travel approval to work. Our plan fell apart, but it appears God had His plan for it all and it seems to be working.

When we finished the training and I spoke to Bishop Earl, one of the things he told me was that he was a bit reluctant to name this group acolytes because Church rules only allowed men to be Acolytes. Neither of us could figure out a way around this, so we decided to pray and see. At this point, we were still in Quarantine anyway.

Well, then a crazy thing happened: a couple months later, Pope Francis announced that he was changing the rules so that women could be named Acolytes...wow!

This is, more or less, where we are now. We are gathering a group of women to train them as Acolytes so that, when their training is complete, we will have a nice group of men and women leading the way in training our lectors, servers, ushers, Eucharistic Ministers, sacristan, etc.

So, in the end, we will have a small group of men and women who will be in charge of training people for all the various ministries during mass. These men and women will have read books about the liturgy, attended classes and prayed together in order to strengthen their ability to lead us in liturgical ministry. I'm very excited about this.

Please remember that this is a lot of work and that it's going to take us a bit of time to get back to normal. We are striving hard to make this happen but are limited by our schedules and work load.

Beyond this, a couple other updates about mass.

Fr. Le is taking over liturgy. All of this has been slowed down for the year that I was working alone here. Fr. Le has been one of the best blessings of my life and I just can't thank God enough for him. He works hard, is kind and is always ready to jump in where he can. At the same time, he helps me to slow down a bit and not try to do everything!

The Doctors Lee are helping us pray so well...I just love our music and I'm so grateful to God. One of the things you may have noticed over the last couple years is how much focus we are putting on the Psalms. I love this because frankly, you know more Scripture than you think, because you know the songs we have been singing. Our Church teaches us that Psalms are an extremely important part of our masses and I'm so glad they are helping us do that. So, that is a lot of updates on mass, but I know its info we all needed.

The mass is, in many ways, what defines us as a Church and I'm so glad I get to pray it with all of you.

Next week, we'll take a look at our future projects in our new Church!

I thank God everyday for the joy of being your priest.
Fjk

Update THREE

Okay, we're moving through the updates and now, we will take a look at our new Church and see where we are and what is left to do.

The first thing to make sure you understand is that we do have significant needs, but we cannot fund raise for those needs for a couple reasons:

- First, we just did that. You all answered the bell and funded the construction of a new Church and I'd like to give everyone a pause to catch their breath.
- Second, the diocese does not allow a new campaign until the old one is done. We still have some faithful people paying their pledges on the Witness to Hope and the Restore the Temple campaigns and, until that is done, we won't be able to do any official fundraisers for our other needs.

Most of the things that I will list below already have a significant amount of prep work done and even paid for. We designed and built the Church so that we don't have to pay any money for ripping old things out when we install these items, praise God.

Once we are free, these are the two highest priority items for us to pursue in our Church:

- **Organ Pipes:** we've got the Church set up to receive the pipes, but it is an incredibly expensive venture to move them up to the front. We'll have hard numbers for you when the time comes, but that is a big priority for us. Holy Mother Church has always asked Churches to use organs where she can in worship, above pianos or any other instrument. We are blessed to have an awesome organ, we just need the money to move it into Church.
- **Baptismal Font:** We have everything ready here, but again, it's a matter of fabricating the font we designed and installing it. The font has been designed and the entire area is ready for it to be installed, it's simply a matter of raising money to have it built and installed.
- *UPDATE: An anonymous donor recently offered to fund the completion of the Baptismal Font. The design has been submitted to an artist who is currently fabricating it. Praise God!*

The rest of the things I list are in no particular order:

- **A Portico:** One of the things we are all set for, except the funding, is a portico, a cover above our doors that will allow people to drop off their loved ones in the rain and/or snow to keep them dry. We have the structures in place, we just need to pay for the materials and the installation.
- **Our Mary and Joseph statues** near the sanctuary of our Church are pretty beat up. It is my fervent hope that we can, at some point, purchase some colorful, quality statues in their place.

- **“Saint Wall”** - hopefully, you remember that the theme for our Church building contains the idea of “The Cloud of Witnesses” spoken of in the Book of Hebrews. Our Church contains a lot of reminders of the presence of the saints at our masses: we have saint medals in the floor, statues, and even an amazing amount of old statues and rosaries in the foundation of our Church, particularly under the altar. A long term goal that I have is a mural of Holy Saints in procession painted on the soffits of our Church.
- **Confessionals**, we are looking at ways to enhance the dignity and emotional warmth of the penitential side of the confessionals.

So, that is where we are for our Spiritual Home and I am very excited about this! Thank you for all the sacrifices you made to help us build this. We now have a place that our brothers and sisters that use wheelchairs can access, and a place where sound and heating and cooling is integrated into the building. A place of dignity and light. It’s up to us to let God’s Holy Spirit continue to fill it with His love and light.

You are all an answer to my prayers.

Next week, we’ll take a look at our buildings and grounds situation.

Your Priest,
Fjk

Update FOUR

In our last update, we looked at the future projects we will need to tackle in our Church and why we aren't starting on them yet. In this one, we will look at the often neglected buildings and grounds things that need to be done, as well as our Beloved School.

I've been assigned to more than a few parishes in my time and the one thing that burns every parish eventually is bricks and mortar, as well as roofs. These things tend to be hard to raise money for and most priests don't seem willing or able to set future generations up for success there.

At my last assignment, we ended up spending in excess of \$300,000 doing brick and mortar repairs on a small church because no one had addressed bricks and mortars for over 20 years. The head of the company we got to work on it told me that if Catholic Churches ever learned to spend about \$5,000 a year on bricks and mortar, the savings would be realized over time.

When I first got here and saw all the bricks we use, I confess I got nervous: every parish I've been to has had big money problems because no one took care of the bricks until they had to.

We had some pros look over our buildings and it turns out it is past time for us to do something here.

In many areas of our buildings and grounds, we are in some trouble and we have to address it. We've got professionals looking at these things and helping us come up with a plan and to put those plans into a time frame and that is where we are right now.

The biggest single issue we have on our parish grounds is drainage. This problem is making all sorts of other problems. To put it bluntly, water and salt are chewing away at our sidewalks and bricks and even sending dirt down the drains, only making the problem worse. Why is this happening? Because all the water on the north side of our complex has to go somewhere and right now, that somewhere is behind the Church and through the rectory, the Fr. Bush hall and the stairway between the gym and the office.

A City of Grand Blanc official informed us that according to their records, the stairs were built where they are as a temporary solution because they were built over a convergence of three drainage fields. No matter how much money we pump into those stairs (and we have pumped some money into it!), they will always degrade within a year, as they have the last time we put money into them.

To put it bluntly, what we need is a pretty radical plan that will address that entire area, solve our drain problems and allow us some sort of easier access from the lower parking lot and parish center to the upper area of Church/gym/office/school.

We have a group of professionals and volunteers who have been noodling this for months and we feel like we are closer everyday to bringing in a company to help us make a prudent plan and present it to you, along with the cost.

This, I hope you can see, is a very high priority for us because of all the damage it is causing. If we don't fix this, anything we do fix will simply start to erode again because we haven't solved the problem at the root.

Once we finish the Witness to Hope and Restore the Temple campaigns, we hope to introduce the solution for this as well.

Beyond that, we do have a lot of projects to knock out: roofs, brickwork, etc. have all been neglected for too long and each year we don't address these, we only make it worse.

We also need to be conscious of a vital part of our ministry to the world: Our School. It costs almost \$6,000.00 to educate a child at our school.

The good news is that this is nearly half of what it costs the public schools to educate, but the challenge is that our tuition cost is nowhere near the cost to educate. The diocesan standard for us is to cover 30-35% of the cost to educate and charge tuition for the rest.

For the past few years, we have been JOYFULLY funding more than 51% of the cost to educate because that's what the school needs. This is, obviously, a huge sacrifice and one we will offer as long as we can.

At this same time, we can't continue to function this way and as a result, we have spoken to our parents about raising tuition over the next couple years. We simply have to balance our finances with our principles: we have to be responsible, we want to make sure we never price people out of a Catholic education.

We recognize that some public school systems are falling into new theories and ideas that are neither conducive to Christian living nor good for our children. To put it bluntly, in some places, indoctrination into a world view is replacing education. If this phenomena continues, our schools will become a spiritual oasis for many and we simply have to figure out how to keep education affordable. We have plans we are working on on this front and we will keep you updated. It's simply another idea we need to be cognizant of.

Thank you for taking all this time to read this, I know it might feel like a lot, it sure does to me, but I am filled with hope. Everything we have presented to our Lord has been taken care of and we will meet these challenges with great hope, joy and fidelity. Our grandchildren will inherit a parish that is healthy, strong and well taken care of.

I bless God that he brought me here, I love being your priest.
Fjk

Update FIVE

In the last update, I shared with you all about our building and grounds and all the work the Lord is calling us to address there.

This week, I want to run you through leadership at the parish and how I'm trying to adapt your needs with what I am capable of. I long to serve you well; you are God's gift to me and I want desperately to give you my best. So, let's dive in while I try to describe where I think the Lord is taking us on this.

This is a very, very active Church with many diverse things happening. Everything we do here has an effect on someone else. My first year or so was a confusing and overwhelming flood of questions and data. I found it impossible to do anything because each effort I made affected something I wasn't aware of.

Last year, shortly before we went into Quarantine, my friend Kevin Neugent offered to come and work here for a year to help me figure out how to manage such a massive influx of information and keep in mind the whole of the situation while doing it.

This resulted in his creation of the Executive Team. This is a group of people at leadership positions within our Church that take each question and weigh it against the whole. On this team are six people who work at the parish and the system is set up so that all necessary information flows up into the group and then out from it. It really is helping a lot.

This prevents the constant stream of "end run" questions or quickly made decisions that have negative long term effects. It's been an absolute game changer for me and I believe for our parish as well.

Kevin will be leaving us soon; he set aside retirement for a year in order to help us and I am so very grateful. I confess to being a bit nervous about proceeding without him, as he has been such a big help, but I know I felt the same way when we lost Brian Kita and that worked out. Please pray that God sends us a business manager to give us the help we need at a price we can afford. Beyond that, right before the quarantine, I worked with a group of you to form a Parish Advisory Council. This is a group of people of various ages and states of life who I will meet with a few times a year. We will pray together and talk through what they perceive the needs of our parish to be and help me stay connected to the various undercurrents that flow within our parish.

Fjk

Update SIX

So, I've now shared five updates and this will be the last. It is my assumption that we are moving every week closer to functioning as normal, which will allow me to use the bulletin to keep everyone updated.

In this article, I want to talk to you all about the vision for our parish, the future and how I believe I can best serve you as your priest.

In terms of the vision of our parish, it is my sincerest hope that we form a *Holy Family*. *I desire that each of us, through the work of the sacraments and the grace we find there grow in holiness. It is by daily and transformative contact with Jesus that you and I find the strength and ability to be like Christ out in the world. We will be Christ to the world by our holiness, our obsessive care for the poor and vulnerable and our willingness to sacrifice whatever is needed to help families who need help.*

It's that simple.

I'm not a big fan of trying to be a successful parish; I don't think business models or "efforts to grow our parish" are the key. I believe that the best thing we can do as a parish is be holy and let that do the work of "growing the parish" if it is God's Will.

I believe the best thing I can do is focus on those things only a priest can do: mass, confessions, baptisms, etc. I am not a trained CEO, CFO or COO and the more I try to immerse myself in these roles, the less time I have to serve you in the manner God made me to.

All of my training and all of my experience have taught me one simple, brutal truth: my highest priority as your priest is personal holiness. If I am not holy, I will fail you in ways that do lasting damage.

I absolutely must make sure I am praying faithfully everyday. I need to go to confession at least once a month. I need to stay faithful to my sharing and accountability group of priests and I need to make sure and check in with my counselor regularly. I need to make sure I am keeping up on my readings and that I work hard on homilies. As a priest, I recognize that I am given too much power and I need to make sure I am giving as much of it away as possible so that I do not grow arrogant or into someone who is difficult to work with.

I need to recognize my limitations: I am not a professional counselor. I am not a spiritual director. Beyond what I am trained to do (sacraments), I recognize that I am a good teacher. I've taught a lot: high school and college and I've offered teaching opportunities here that people seem to enjoy.

If I focus on these things, as well as the daily things that I am required to do business wise, that is a very, very full and life-giving week.

To be blunt, I also need you to recognize my limitations. My inability to serve as

a counselor or spiritual director has caused some of you pain but long, hard experience has taught me that the greater pain comes when I pretend I am capable of doing these things and then inevitably fail. I am a limited human in so many ways, please keep that in mind.

In terms of the future, this is where we need to be brave, flexible and trust that God is at work. While it is true that a smaller percentage of Catholics participate in regular Church life than in the past, there are simply many more Catholics in this country than there ever have been. While they do not go to mass regularly, they do expect us to offer their weddings, baptisms, funerals, etc. They still call us when they get sick or need help.

This need is tremendous and, at the same time, there has never been a bigger gap between the number of Catholics and the number of priests in our country. Priests are experiencing a tremendous amount of pressure and frankly, burnout and health crisis are becoming an issue for a lot of my brothers.

Our future as a Church is going to be dictated by this reality: we will have less priests and more Catholics every year for some time. It is clear that the issue of declining number of priests versus rising numbers of Catholics in our country is not going to change soon. Even if we end up with a huge influx of seminarians next year, it takes ten years to make a priest.

I would imagine there will be monumental moves by the diocese to try to address this reality in the next year and I ask that you pray we respond well. Whatever the particulars of that response, one thing that seems clear to me is that priests will need to be hyper focused on the things they can do that no one else can and humbly hand off the rest to Lay Employees. For a lot of priests, it can be hard to find people that can afford the low wages that come with working for the Church, but we are blessed here with a great many competent and generous people who are working for us, knowing they could be making more money in the secular world. I hope and pray you honor them for that.

In the meantime, we will adapt to whatever reality God gives us because God is bigger than any of our circumstances. The Church absolutely experienced explosive growth when it was composed of nothing but 12 priests, all of whom happened to be saints. I will, by the grace of God, fight hard to be a saint. I am a sinner, I am broken, but I also know I am loved and empowered by God. As my mother often said "I do not know what the future holds, but I do know who holds the future."

I can't wait to see where Jesus takes us.

I love you all. I can't believe I get to be your priest.
Fjk