

Easter Sunday: March 31st, 2024

Dear Community of St. Philip the Apostle Parish,

On behalf of your hard-working parish staff, as well as our Finance Council, Knights of Columbus, Mystical Rose Sodality, St. Vincent de Paul Conference, St. Philip Teen Apostles, Safety & Security Ministry, musical and liturgical ministers, and our many other ministries, I wish you a truly joyous and holy Easter. Reflecting on the meaning of the Resurrection of Jesus, we embrace the Spirit of renewal and rebirth; we bear witness to God's unshakeable faithfulness and unconquerable love for us; we are grateful that our God never fails to fulfill his promises to us. At this time of year especially, I find these words of from the Book of Ezekiel, read at the Easter Vigil Mass, truly inspiring: "I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees." (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

You have continued to help me observe God's decrees for my life as a priest and pastor in the time I have been here. I trust that somehow the good Lord has spoken to many of you through my ministry, and that in his faithfulness He will continue to do so. Thanks for your prayers. I promise to keep you in mine as we journey as one in his Name.

It has been a huge blessing for me to serve as your pastor here at St. Philip the Apostle for these past three years. I have continued to witness numerous examples of your faith and trust in God. You are a prayerful, humble, hardworking, and welcoming parish. You value your faith, your families, and our community above all else. You have a desire to serve the Lord and this community, and I know this comes from a place of love and gratitude for his abundant blessings in your lives. And last but far from least – thank you for the new rectory! I can't wait to have our open house in the coming days.

We are blessed to celebrate the victory of Christ now and for several weeks to come in the Church's calendar. With overflowing gratitude, however, *let us always keep his victory fresh in our minds and hearts*. Whatever the good Lord has in store for us in the coming months and years we will spend together, we keep our eyes always fixed on Him, and especially on what He has accomplished for us!

Journeying together as a parish family, we will follow in Christ's footsteps, hold steadfast along the way, and trust in his power to protect us, sanctify us, guide us, and give us his true peace. As we now celebrate *the ultimate victory*, which is the Lord's Resurrection, we each accept his incredibly generous offer to share it with us: "I will give the victor the right to sit with me on my throne, as I myself first won the victory and sit with my Father on his throne." (Rev 3:21)

Happy Easter! Happy Resurrection Sunday! Alleluia! He is Risen! Alleluia!

Yours in Jesus through Mary and Joseph - Fr. Tom

St. Philip the Apostle, pray for us!