



My Dear St. Joseph Parish Family,

This past week, the priests of the Diocese were asked by our diocesan archivist to document the various ways our parishes have been responding to the current global pandemic. While reviewing our diocesan history, she realized that there had been very little documentation on how parishes responded during the Spanish Flu in 1918. This request will help us to preserve our continued diocesan history and will serve as a testimony to our witness of the Gospel for future generations of the Church. As we said last week, even if the world may seem to be shut down, the work of the Gospel continues here at St. Joseph and throughout the world.

Just as we might feel that we are living in historical times, so the Church has lived for over two thousand years. The Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, faithfully continues to guide His flock, the Church, even today. One beautiful aspect of our Church history is that it is a knowable history. We can learn about the history of our parish, all the way back to our first resident pastor, Fr. N.A. Keller, and even further back when we were first served by priests as a mission parish starting in 1870s. In the same way, we can learn about the history of Holy Mother Church since Her very beginning when She was founded by our Lord Jesus Christ.

We can learn this history of Holy Mother Church both in the New Testament and through the written testimonies and histories given throughout the ages. Within the Season of Easter, our first reading always comes from the Acts of the Apostles. In the Acts of the Apostles, we hear from St. Luke of how the Church was built up by the Apostles going out into the world and preaching the name of Jesus Christ. In the

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testimonials and histories given, we hear of how the Church has continued to be built up throughout the various centuries. Knowing our own history is very important to having a greater understanding of our Church and, as such, will help us to grow in our own personal relationship with our Lord.

At times, we may have a great desire to return to the very beginning: To worship our Lord in the same way that our Church did following the Ascension. Thankfully, these testimonials and histories help us to be able to do just that as the authors often provided written testimonies of how our early Church worshipped. Included with this bulletin is an excerpt from the *First Apology in Defense of the Christians* by St. Justin Martyr. Written to the pagan Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius in 156 AD, St. Justin offered the Emperor detailed insight into Christian belief and worship. In this short excerpt, he offers a description of the Christian celebration of the Eucharist.

In this description, we see that the early Church places such true emphasis on the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. This understanding of the Eucharist and who it truly is (Jesus!) helps to direct the Christians in how they are to live their very lives. Gathering together on Sunday, they heard readings from the prophets (Old Testament) and the Apostles (New Testament). Those gathered are then urged and exhorted by the president (*presbyteros* in Greek) to live within the moral life. After standing together in prayer, gifts of bread and wine are brought forward and the president offers prayers and gives thanks over the gifts as the people give their assent by saying, “Amen.” The Eucharist is distributed and then taken out by the deacons to those who could not gather with the community.

In this description of worship within the early Church, what do we see before us but the Readings, a Homily, Prayers of Intercession, and, finally, the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We see the Mass. And, just as Mass was celebrated 2000 years ago, so it continues to be celebrated today. Even though we cannot yet be together to celebrate, the Sacrifice continues to be offered every single day for each and every one of you (and our whole world!). May our hearts be burning with desire until we can gather together again at the altar to truly receive our Lord in the Eucharist.

Faithfully in Christ, Fr. David

CARDS OF SUPPORT FOR THE HOMEBOUND

In this time of social distancing, may we keep in prayer our loved ones who are in assisted-care facilities and nursing homes. To help brighten their days, we are working with our area assisted-care facilities and nursing homes to send cards and notes. All ages are invited to participate! Please mail cards to the Parish Office or place them in the marked box in the Narthex when you are stopping at the Church to pray.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

“No one may share the eucharist with us unless he believes that what we teach is true, unless he is washed in the regenerating waters of baptism for the remission of his sins, and unless he lives in accordance with the principles given us by Christ.

We do not consume the eucharistic bread and wine as if it were ordinary food and drink, for we have been taught that as Jesus Christ our Savior became a man of flesh and blood by the power of the Word of God, so also the food that our flesh and blood assimilates for its nourishment becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus by the power of his own words contained in the prayer of thanksgiving.

The apostles, in their recollections, which are called gospels, handed down to us what Jesus commanded them to do. They tell us that he took bread, gave thanks and said: Do this in memory of me. This is my body. In the same way he took the cup, he gave thanks and said: This is my blood. The Lord gave this command to them alone. Ever since then we have constantly reminded one another of these things. The rich among us help the poor and we are always united. For all that we receive we praise the Creator of the universe through his Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit.

On Sunday we have a common assembly of all our members, whether they live in the city or the outlying districts. The recollections of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as there is time. When the reader has finished, the president of the assembly speaks to us; he urges everyone to imitate the examples of virtue we have heard in the readings. Then we all stand up together and pray.

On the conclusion of our prayer, bread and wine and water are brought forward. The president offers prayers and gives thanks to the best of his ability, and the people give assent by saying, “Amen.” The eucharist is distributed, everyone present communicates, and the deacons take it to those who are absent.

The wealthy, if they wish, may make a contribution, and they themselves decide the amount. The collection is placed in the custody of the president, who uses it to help the orphans and widows and all who for any reason are in distress, whether because they are sick, in prison, or away from home. In a word, he takes care of all who are in need.

We hold our common assembly on Sunday because it is the first day of the week, the day on which God put darkness and chaos to flight and created the world, and because on that same day our savior Jesus Christ rose from the dead. For he was crucified on Friday and on Sunday he appeared to his apostles and disciples and taught them the things that we have passed on for your consideration.”

WHO IS ST. JUSTIN MARTYR?

Born at Nablus (ancient Shechem), Palestine, about 100 AD, Justin came from a pagan family. At the age of thirty-three, after years of studying the various systems of philosophy, he became converted to Christianity by way of Platonism. Eventually, St. Justin realized that the soul could not arrive at the idea of God through human knowledge alone, but needed to be instructed and guided by the Prophets inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thereafter, his whole life was devoted to the propagation and defense of the Faith in Asia Minor and at Rome.

Though he retained the garb of a philosopher, he is the most important Christian Apologist of the 2nd Century and the first of whom we possess written works from. These are the two *Apologies* (to Emperor Antoninus Pius and the Roman Senate) setting forth the moral values of Christianity, and the *Dialogue* (demonstrating its truth to the Jew Trypho). These works are invaluable for the information they contain about the Christian Faith and its practice as observed by the early Church.

In 165 AD, while bearing witness to the Faith in Rome, St. Justin was denounced as a Christian, most likely at the instigation of a Cynic philosopher whom he had outshone in a public debate. Arrested and ordered to sacrifice to the gods, he replied: “No right-minded man forsakes truth for falsehood.” Six others arrested with him remained steadfast with him and they all attained the palm of martyrdom.

WHY DID ST. JUSTIN MARTYR WRITE HIS APOLOGIES?

St. Justin sought to refute various accusations that were being leveled against Christians, including atheism, immorality, and creating civil unrest. To do this, he offered explanations and justifications for Christian doctrine and worship practices. Challenging the Emperor, St. Justin reminded him that Christians had no fear of death (“*You can kill, but not hurt us.*”) and that his greater concern was with the Emperor’s own eternal salvation (“*We ourselves will invite you to do that which is pleasing to God.*”).

“We pray for our enemies; We seek to persuade those who hate us without cause to live conformably to the goodly precepts of Christ, that they may become partakers with us of the joyful hope of blessings from God, the Lord of all.”

St. Justin Martyr