

Dear Friends in Christ,

Peace be with you! I write this letter on the first leg of sabbatical as I look out my window in Poland, and see the beautiful Cathedral of Krakow where St. John Paul II celebrated his first Mass of Thanksgiving as a new priest on November 2, 1946 and later served as Archbishop from 1964-1978 when he was named Pope. On the day of his ordination, Father Karol Wojtyla passed out hand written holy cards to all those in attendance which echoed the words of Our Blessed Mother Mary, "The Almighty has done great things for me and holy is His name!"

The Almighty has certainly done great things for us as a parish as we were abundantly blessed to be the host parish for the National Eucharistic Congress last week and serve as the Sacred Adoration Chapel for nearly 60,000 pilgrims from across the nation and world! We were also super blessed to host the Eucharistic Village on Georgia Street and in our parking lot, as a pilgrim respite site and a place of radical hospitality for the multitudes.

Before we were formed in the womb, God planned for this Eucharistic Revival and Supernatural outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us in our day and time! In 1867 Our Lord led Msgr. Bessonies, the pastor of St John's, to build a church on the corner of Capitol Ave and Georgia Street that was criticized as being "too large and too expensive" for the current congregation of Irish and German immigrants to the village of Indianapolis. Yet, he stood steadfast, and by God's guidance and grace, led the building of the "Great Cathedral of the Midwest," as it was called by the Indianapolis news media. Little did they know then that God planned for St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church to be the Perpetual Adoration Chapel for the 10th National Eucharistic Congress!

On the day of the dedication of our sacred space in 1871, the news read, "As far as the eye could see, there was a sea of humanity coming to the great Cathedral of the Midwest for its first Mass and Consecration." My brother and sisters, last week, July 15-21 was yet another week in the great history of our parish... for as far as the eye could see, there was a sea of humanity coming to worship Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in the most Blessed Sacrament, the Holy Eucharist, God's very flesh and blood, given to us so that we might have life in Him and He might be life for the world in our day and time!

My friends, we continue to cry out, "The Almighty has done great things for us, and holy is His name!" As the four Eucharistic Processions descended upon St John's last Tuesday morning, we knew that God was truly with us! Thousands of pilgrims, some of whom traveled hundreds of miles with our Lord from the beginning at Pentecost, sang and praised Jesus as they came down Capitol Ave to their final destination. It was a heavenly site to see and an encounter with Our Sovereign God that was beyond human imagination! The four national pilgrimages culminated in the Pilgrim Mass, hosted by St John's and celebrated by Archbishop Charles Thompson. Rarely in my lifetime have I experienced the Holy Spirit more present than at this Holy Sacrifice where pilgrims worshipped with the angels and saints as a "Great Cloud of Witness" of the Church militant and Church Triumphant!

Then unfolded a plethora of Supernatural and Heavenly events from the glorious Masses in Lucas Oil Stadium to the many amazing talks given by the best theologians, teachers and disciples of our day to the very powerful city-wide Eucharistic Procession in which our streets became gateways to heaven on earth as nearly 60,000 bent down and raised up their voices to praise Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist! It was a sight that our city has never seen as Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Religious sisters and

brothers, seminarians and the laity all marched forth with Jesus to be light in the darkness and hope for all the world! "The Almighty has done great things for us and holy is His name!"

One of the greatest gifts for our parish was God's call to us to both host Perpetual Adoration for the pilgrims as well as to be a place of hospitality and respite for pilgrims. Over 500 volunteers, parishioners and friends of St John's, served in the Church and in the Eucharistic Village here at our parish. Parishioners were hospitality at the doors of the Church, welcoming and serving the needs of our brothers and sisters with loving kindness. Volunteers also served thousands of pilgrims food and drink and love in the Eucharistic Village from 5:30 am to midnight daily. Men of the parish, Esto Vir, took overnight shifts ensuring the safety and filling the needs of pilgrims who prayed in the night and early morning hours. Our choir members sang for pre-Congress Masses. Many parishioners also stuffed swag bags at a moment's notice before the Congress began and several served as Congress volunteers and even hosted pilgrims in their homes! Our ministry team at St John's gave an extraordinary gift of self and collaboratively worked over 300 hours past the 40 hours asked of them!

Cardinal Tagle said in the closing homily of the Mass last Sunday that we are made to be gift of self... to keep the faith to ourselves is selfish. To give of ourselves and share the Good News is selfless and literally what we are made for. My sisters and brothers, how can I express as your pastor how grateful I am to you for being such an amazing gift of self to God's Holy Church this past week? Thank you, thank you, thank you.... from the depths of my heart, I thank you for being an amazing witness of God's love and for helping to make the National Eucharistic Congress a highlight of life on earth for so many! Together we echo the words of our Blessed Mother Mary, "The Almighty has done great things for us and holy is His name!"

I am also deeply grateful for this time of renewal as I begin sabbatical in Poland. Joining me is a great friend and brother from my seminary years, father Ernesto Reynoso who is a great priest serving in the Archdiocese of Phoenix. We will be walking in the footsteps of St John Paul II, praying through his intercession at the important places of his life in Poland. One of the highlights I anticipate is to celebrate Mass in the Churches where he lived and served as well as in the mountains of Zakopany where he hiked with friends and celebrated Mass in God's beautiful creation!

We are also most blessed to be able to pray and celebrate Mass in the chapel of Divine Mercy where St. Faustina received the image and message of Divine Mercy for the world! And, visits to Auschwitz, where St. Maximilian Kolbe gave his life for another man, and the shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa, where our Blessed Mother's image and intercession has blessed Poland and the world.

I am already praying for you in all these holy shrines and Churches and most especially will offer you and your intentions to our Lord at the Chapel of Divine Mercy where St. Faustina received the image of Jesus' Divine Mercy and God's message of His infinite Divine Love and Mercy available to the whole world. I look forward to being back for two weddings, baptisms and two weekends of Masses August 9-18 and then off again for two more weeks of sabbatical and renewal in the Mountains of Montana.

Until we meet again, May God bless you and keep you close to His Sacred Heart!

Eucharistic Blessings, father Rick Nagel