

Dear Parishioners,

The elections are over and gone for a few years are the political ads. Whether your candidate won or lost, the big winner was **Democracy**. It really is unbelievable that so many people voted and the election certainly was a nail biter. And thank God there was no violence! Now, we pray for a peaceful transition of power. Let us continue to pray for the healing of our country and that we can come together to face those issues that are plaguing us.

Last Saturday I celebrated my 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary to the priesthood with quiet reflection on how my life changed after the bishop ordained me. In fact, the day was similar to Saturday- a warm and sunny autumn day. I was ordained in the morning and later would celebrate my first Mass at Holy Family Parish in Sparta where I was serving as a deacon. Since I was ordained for the diocese of Grand Rapids, I would spend my entire career in the diocese. Little did I realize that I would have opportunities to see the world and visit places like Paris, Dublin and Alaska- all without leaving the confines of the diocesan borders. I am proud to be associated with this diocese because of all the priests and people I have gotten to know and serve. I have always enjoyed my assignments- including my present one. I have learned so much and continue to learn how to be a better pastor. Next year I hope that we will be able to gather and celebrate my 40<sup>th</sup>. Mark the date on your calendar and plan to come.

The covid-19 virus has reared its ugly head in our parish. We have at least two people in the hospital and several are home recuperating. As I mentioned on Sunday, I received a call Saturday evening from Marv Baumann who is now home after a week in the hospital. He thanks us for our prayers and concerns. He will continue to heal at home. On a personal note, I tested for the virus last week and the results came back negative. Let us continue to pray for those infected with this terrible virus.

Also, we received word that Lou Gula fell and broke a bone. Because of his age, surgery was not an option. He will be going to a rehab center for three months. Please remember him in your prayers and send him a note if you can.

Finally, shortly after the Feast of All Souls, I visited the grave of my family. It was a somber moment for me remembering and praying for my family. I hope that you are able to take some time to remember the deceased members of your family. We belong to a family, some are alive and others deceased, all need to be remembered. For those who are alive, we have many occasions to show our love and appreciation, for those who are called from this earth, we can only pray and remember them. I hope you take some time to visit the graves of loved ones and say a prayer for them.

Please stay safe and healthy- Fr. Tom