

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the birthday of the Church, Pentecost Sunday. We rejoice in the birth she received when the promised Advocate, the Paraclete, descended upon the disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem. The Spirit gives us ardor which sustains us in our Christian life and our call to discipleship. The Acts of the Apostles aptly describes the truly universal nature of the Church and how, although we come from different cultural, economic and social circumstances, we are united in faith. We are united in the conviction that God loves us and initiates for us a relationship premised on unconditional love, mercy and forgiveness, and openness to the Spirit. The very dramatic description of what took place in Jerusalem at Pentecost can help us to understand more clearly the reality that our discipleship is mutual and inter-dependent.

The universal nature of the Church was made dramatically clear for me a few years ago. In 2014, I had the opportunity to be in Rome for the canonization of Saint Pope John XXIII and Saint Pope John Paul II. I was joined by parishioners Rozanne Southorn, her daughter Barbara Mieres and Madeline Gambelin. The day before the Canonization Mass, Barbara and I were walking on the main thoroughfare above Saint Peter's Basilica, the Borgo Santo Spirito. As we walked, we could hear nearly a million pilgrims singing in several languages: Polish, Spanish, Chinese, Italian, Croatian, German, to name a few. It was absolutely stunning to see people from throughout the world with their national flags and singing simultaneously. I remember saying to Barbara, "That is a testament to the indomitable spirit."

I had the privilege to concelebrate the Canonization Mass on Sunday morning, April 27th. After Mass, as I was leaving Saint Peter's Square, a young woman asked me to bless several rosaries. I ended up blessing thousands of pilgrims from the Philippines, Mexico, Spain, the United States, Canada and several other countries for over three hours. It was quite moving to meet so many youth and people of diverse ages and backgrounds. It was an experience I will never forget. It gave me an even greater appreciation for the diversity of cultures but also the tremendous spirit and faith of our Catholic community. To see the joy and enthusiasm of the pilgrims was truly extraordinary!!

Congratulations to the Class of 2020! This week, our Saint Pius Catholic School eighth graders will be graduating with a Mass on Wednesday and ceremony on Thursday. I want to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Ms. Rita Carroll, Mrs. Peggy Zappelli, Mr. Marc Nava, Ms. Catie Costa, Mr. Steven Olujić, Mrs. Sandy Edens and all the teachers and support staff who have nurtured and taught our graduates. I want to thank our graduates for their perseverance, patience and grace under pressure. I cannot imagine what this experience must be like for you, but your example and maturity has been noted and is most appreciated. Thanks also to the parents of our graduates, for your love and devotion to your children and for investing in the values and privilege of Catholic education. Your tireless commitment and service to our Saint Pius community contributes to making this an amazing place which will always be your home!

Fr. Tom