



*strengthening our faith*

*by rebuilding our heritage*

September 3, 2024

My dear parishioners,

The past few weeks have been filled with sadness, excitement and anticipation. Fr. Benson's leaving has been sad, but **we are so glad for him**. And we are excited to welcome Fr. Isaac and Fr. Joe! **Get ready guys!!** Weddings, baptisms, regular Masses and confessions, young adult activities, homeless ministry, and just a few other things! These events have made me step back and **reflect upon my years at St. Matthew's**. I have spent two different assignments here at the Cathedral. For eleven years I was in residence and part time associate (1974-1985), and I have been the rector here for 29 years (1995-2024). Yes, that's right. **I am celebrating 40 years being a member of this fantastic parish community.**

### *My Early Years at St. Matthew's*

A little history. I was ordained in 1968 by Cardinal O'Boyle. I spent my first years working with the youth and in liturgy at two suburban parishes. Fantastic years. I still have many friends in those parishes. In the spring of 1973, we got a new archbishop, William Wakefield Baum. On September 8 of that year, he invited me to meet with him. To my surprise he asked me to start putting together the **Liturgy Office for the Archdiocese**. Soon we found out I could not do two jobs so in January 1974 I sadly left St. Pius X in Bowie and **moved "downtown" to St. Matthew's!** A Religious Sister was assigned to work with me in the Office—in the basement of the Cathedral rectory. We had a great time in the Office. I also helped Fr. Pat Leddy with the Young Adults and was in charge of the liturgy for the parish. During that period, (1975-1976), I spent 18 months on weekdays in Philadelphia **on the staff of the 41<sup>st</sup> International Eucharistic Congress**. A great experience. The event itself was in August of 1976.

**When I returned to the work of the Office** I continued preparing liturgies for the Archbishop and the Cathedral and I went around to the parishes **giving talks and workshops**. I also served as an MC for the Archbishop and one of the auxiliary bishops. What a wonderful experience. Soon I hired a new assistant, Sr. Constance Ward, SSJ, who remained in the Liturgy Office until just a few years ago. A super person! A young deacon arrived at the same time, and for a few years after ordination, Fr. Godfrey Mosley assisted me part time.

Soon after Sr. Constance was hired it was announced **Pope John Paul II would be visiting** Washington in October 1979. **A Mass for the priests at the Cathedral and then a Mass on the Mall—both to be prepared by the Liturgy Office!! Wow!!** Thank God for Sr. Constance and outstanding volunteers from around the archdiocese! Now THAT was an experience! Only God knows how it turned out so well. What a thrill. **Meeting a Pope who then would be named a saint**. The next years would be "normal." Regular work around the diocese and the Office. In 1980 Bishop James Hickey was named archbishop and in 1982 he opened the Pastoral Center in Hyattsville.

**The Liturgy Office then moved to the Center as well.** A beautiful office with the lovely St. Ursula's Chapel. The future Cardinal was great and very interested in the Office. He had just written a pastoral letter on liturgy when he was still the bishop of Cleveland. He was also a real mentor to me. I can't praise him enough. My five years with him were a real blessing. **In 1985 my Office time ended when I became pastor of Holy Redeemer Parish in College Park.**

Before closing my Liturgy Office history, I want to say that what really made the work enjoyable was **having so many wonderful people at St. Matthew's.** The priests and people of the Cathedral made it the best experience it could possibly be. How could I forget Msgr. Gerhardt, Fr. D'Silva, Fr. Meyers, Fr. Blackwell, Fr. Leddy, Miss Quill and Miss Soto, Mary Rabbitt, John Martin, Mary Latka, and so many others. **The People!! They brought me through the good and the rough times.** A great eleven years.

### *Becoming Cathedral Rector*

**After Holy Redeemer, I served the archdiocese for three years as the Secretary for Parish Life.** Then Cardinal Hickey surprised me by saying he was **sending me to the Cathedral as Rector**, July 1, 1995. Wow!! In many ways **I was returning home.** And here I am, twenty-nine years as Rector and a total of 40 years at the best parish in the archdiocese. And again, what makes it so special are the people—you—priests, deacons, parishioners, and friends. You are my lifeblood. You keep me going. Smooth sailing times and not so smooth. Memories and more memories. Who could forget the **Restoration of the Cathedral, the renovation of the Rectory and parish offices, the construction of 1717 Rhode Island Avenue, the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the parish,** the unbelievable **visit of Pope Francis**, the Monday Morning Ministry for the homeless, the tremendous growth of the Spanish speaking members, a big increase in the number of staff, a budget from less than a million to two and a half million dollars, a music program that rates right at the top, an expansive program in Spanish (especially Liturgy and Faith Formation) and a strong prayer group, a full Social Justice program, an edifying English Faith Formation program (including OCIA), and an extensive communications feature (e-letters, social media, Rector's letters, up to the minute emails and texts), **a fantastic Spanish Teen group and a Young Adult group. And the list could go on and on.**

### *Many People Have Meant So Much*

**But!!** The real highlight of the Cathedral parish? **The people.** The bishops, clergy, staff, parishioners, friends, and visitors. All of them. They have all been my lifeblood. **Their vibrancy has given me the energy to serve them** and to be a presence of the Lord for them. There are so many people that have meant so much to me over the years. I don't dare to start naming anyone by name. However, I have **so loved my little ones I baptize and couples I have married.** As a parish, from July 1, 1995, to April 14, 2024, we have had 11,475 baptisms and 2,111 weddings. Often, I see these families or couples returning to renew the memories they have of their celebrations. **I love to see them.**

**A final word: Thank you.** Thank you for being a part of my life these 29 years as Rector, plus the 11 years I spent here in residence. **And I am not finished just yet! God Bless!**

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Rev. Msgr. W. Ronald Jameson  
Rector