

**A Prayer for COVID-19 Pandemic**

***May we who are merely inconvenienced  
Remember those whose lives are at stake.***

***May we who have no risk factors  
Remember those most vulnerable.***

***May we who have the luxury of working from home  
Remember those who must choose between preserving  
their health or making their rent.***

***May we who have the flexibility to care for our children  
when their schools close,  
Remember those who have no options.***

***May we who have to cancel our Trips  
Remember those that have no safe place to go.***

***May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult  
of the economic market  
Remember those who have no margin at all.***

***May we who settle in for a quarantine at home  
Remember those who have no home.***

***As fear grips our country,  
Let us choose love.***

***During this time when we cannot physically wrap our  
arms around each other,  
Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to  
our neighbors.***

Announcement From Fr. Charles' Desk: Due to new directives from the State of Illinois, and also from the diocese of Belleville, the ceremony of the First Holy Communion for our kids is postponed to June 14th 2020 for both St. Stephen and St Edward. (This date is tentative)

The State of Illinois has issued further directives in respect of containing this coronavirus pandemic through this month of May. We are told to continue obeying the shelter in place order. There will be no public Masses until the ban is lifted. I have being saying my daily and weekend masses privately. I assure you that my weekend homilies will be posted in the bulletin. I do record my weekend masses in YouTube.

**IF YOU WISH TO WATCH FATHER CHARLES SAY SUNDAY MASS  
HERE IS THE "YOUTUBE"  
ADDRESS:  
<https://youtu.be/hypBccSrrg>**

# St. Edward and St. Stephen Catholic Churches

300 NW 5<sup>th</sup> St. Fairfield IL 62837, phone 618-847-7931  
Email: stedwardcatholicchurch01@frontier.com  
Website: stedwardfairfield.com

812 N. Main St., Flora IL 62839, phone 618-662-6261  
Email: ststephen\_flora@yahoo.com  
Website: ststephenflora.com

**Rev. Father Charles Anyaoku, Pastoral Administrator  
Rectory Phone: 618-662-6261 Cell phone: 618-641-8978**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*We, of St. Edward Catholic Church, Fairfield, united as a family of God's people strive to live out the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ through a community spirit of love and service to one another. We endeavor to touch the lives of all with God's living presence and love. We hope to achieve these through: Participating in the sacraments and providing for the spiritual needs of all; the young and the elderly, those with special needs and those who are no longer very active in the parish. Providing a welcoming environment to all including new members who might like to join our parish and those who visit to worship with us. Using our gifts and talents for the life and growth of our parish and for the greater glory of God. Providing a comprehensive system of support services that will assist the poor and the needy as far as our scope can reach.*

## **St. Edward Weekend and Daily Mass Schedule**

Thursday, 6:30 p.m., Friday, 8:00 a.m.  
1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday, 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday 10:30 a.m.

Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation) Friday, 8:30 a.m.  
1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday, 4:20 – 4:40 p.m.

Parish Office: Peggy Garrison, Office Hours Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday, 8 a.m. to noon. Rectory and Office 847-7931, Fax 847-7393, Parish Hall 847-7512  
New Parishioner Register at Parish Office  
PSR Coordinator Diana Zurliene, RCIA Coordinator Ginny Barrett, Music Director Denise Zurliene  
Pastoral Council – 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday, Men's Club – As announced Youth Ministry 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday—5:30pm, Food Pantry Distribution 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday, 8 a.m.

**Baptism, Marriage, Vocations, Sacrament of Anointing & Care of the Sick, contact Fr. Charles Anyaoku or call St. Edward or St. Stephen Parish Offices.**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*St Stephen Church aspires:  
To be united in the love of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.  
To proclaim the word of God by a life of witness in our community and beyond.  
To give the glory through assisting the weak and the less privileged.  
Putting things back together, binding, healing, affirming, serving, restoring and educating the people of God.  
To serve together in reconciling with one another and with God. Sharing our gifts and ourselves for the sake of the Gospel.*

## **St. Stephen Weekend and Daily Mass Schedule**

Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, 6:30 p.m.  
Thursday, 8:00 a.m.  
2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday 8:30 a.m.

Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation) Wednesday after mass, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sat. 4:20– 4:40 pm.,  
Sun 8– 8:20 am. or by appointment

Parish Office: Trudi Herdes, Secretary, Office Hours Monday & Wednesday, 8 a.m. to noon, Office, Fax & Social Room 662-8121, Rectory 662-6261  
New Parishioner Register contact Fr. Charles, Trudi Herdes or Dorothy Uebinger 662-3711

Music Director Diane Briscoe, PSR Coordinator Paul Duquaine, RCIA Coordinator Cheryl McCarty, Sacristan Sam Pierce

Knights of Columbus – 1st Wednesday, 7 pm  
Finance Committee – 3rd Wednesday, 7 p.m.  
Altar Society - As announced  
Pastoral Council - 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday, 7 p.m.  
Food Pantry Collection - First Weekend



Pentecost Sunday

May 31, 2020

## ST. STEPHEN MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

NO MASSES OR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

**May 25 – Two Week Collection** - \$2,019.00

Catholic Communication Campaign - \$60.00  
Seminar Education - \$90.00  
Ascension - \$30.00

Cemetery Fence Fund – In memory of Mr. & Mrs.  
John T. Frank and James D. McCarty - \$250.00

Thank you so much to those who continue to help  
St Stephen's financially. Please continue to mail  
them to the church or drop envelopes off in Fr.  
Charles mailbox slot on the west side, Main Street  
side of church.

**PRAYER INTENTIONS:** Linda Griffy, Bill Marks,  
Nicole Wheaton, Velma Oliver, Clara Wilson,  
Ray Vaughn, LaVonne Kemmerer, Patience  
McKnight, Mildred Garrison, Pat Venable,  
Clarice Schweighart, Irene Winka,  
SteveDudzick, Ruth Wilson, Roger Wells,  
Rhonda Ryker, Don & Mary Bunnell, Marilyn  
Wheaton, Lois Houlihan, Cory Britton, Ed  
Perk, Georgia Klingler, Celeste Replogle,  
Georgianna Weber, Luke Miller, Helen  
Powless, Marie Elwat, Cindy Bloemer, Kennah  
Hiestand, Jean Quinn, Claire Karasch, Judie  
Powless, Claire Fopay, Harrison Hilliard, Becky  
Dulaney, Maria Pemberton, Joyce Heuerman,  
Frank Zimmerman, Mary Patridge, Clara Keys,  
Larry Hagen, Connie Schlabach, Nursing home  
residents

Thank you to the 21 households that have already pledge to support the  
mission of the Church to teach, preach, minister and serve in the name of  
Jesus through their financial support of The Catholic Services and  
Ministry Appeal. So far **\$4,548** has been pledged. If you have not please  
efforts to do so. Our goal \$4,976.

**Remember: Food Pantry and Guadalupe Project are in need of our  
help.**

**TO ALL ST. STEPHEN PARISHIONERS:** IN ORDER TO OBEY THE SOCIAL DISTANCING CONCEPT, THE  
BISHOP HAS DECIDED AND DIRECTED THE PASTORS TO CANCEL ALL LITURGICAL SERVICES AND  
MASSES. PLEASE BEAR WITH US AT THIS MOMENT. LET US UNITE IN PRAYERS THAT GOD WILL  
COME TO OUR NEED. BE ASSURED OF MY PRAYERS. **PLEASE CONTACT ME AT 618-641-8978 OR  
Trudi Herdes WITH ANY QUESTIONS.** Father, Charles, Pastoral Administrator

**HOME BLESSINGS** - Contact Ted Whitehead to set up a  
time for Father Charles to come and bless your home.  
For more information see Ted or Father Charles.

**We are in dire need of altar servers.** Altar  
servers can be children who have received their  
first communion as well as any adults are  
welcome.

Please submit bulletin  
information to Beth  
Fancher, call 618-676-  
4292 Or email  
[bafancher@wabash.net](mailto:bafancher@wabash.net)  
by noon on  
Wednesdays.

Pentecost Sunday

May 31, 2020

## ST. EDWARD MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

NO MASSES OR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

The Scripture readings are below for your reading.

PRAYER INTENTIONS: Kim Buchanan, Lanora Neavill, Leon Chamness, Tom Colvin, Jack Ciesielczyk, Jalain  
Thompson, Nanette Williams, Julie Griffith, Gina Williams, Emilee Stanley, Maddox Oppenheimer, Sara  
Kerchner, Charles Drechsel, Eva Decker, Matthew Rorban, Andrew Mayo, Robyn Meagher, Elaine Jeffers,  
Homer and Shirley Clark, Alice Zurliene, Tim Dittmer, Terri Venturelli, Linda States, James Rawls, Cathy  
Newville, Luke Dewees, Ruth & Ralph Langhauser, Teresa Williams, Randy White, Raymond Garrison, Noah  
Gollner, Rusti Grogan, Ed Nelson, Mark Fleming, Mary Murphy, Ginny Barrett, Ernie Sork, David Ochs & all  
priests who are sick.

### Weekly Contribution 05/24

|               |            |
|---------------|------------|
| Envelopes(24) | \$2,193.00 |
| Loose         | 00.00      |
| Total         | \$2,193.00 |
| We need       | \$1,887.00 |

|                   |          |
|-------------------|----------|
| Building Fund     | \$277.00 |
| Donations         | 100.00   |
| Seminar Education | 25.00    |
| Ascension         | 50.00    |
| Rice Bowl         | 25.00    |

Please submit bulletin  
information to Peggy Garrison at  
the Parish Office by noon on  
Wednesdays.

### **Our Daily Scripture Readings:**

**Mon:** *The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church*  
Gn 3:9-15, 20 Jn 19:25-34

**Tues:** *Saints Marcellinus and Peter*  
2 Pt 3:12-15a, 17-18 Mk 12:13-17

**Wed:** *Saint Charles Lwanga and Companions*  
2 Tm 1:1-3, 6-12 Mk 12:18-27

**Thur:** *Weekday*  
2 Tm 2:8-15 Mk 12:28-34

**Fri:** *Saint Boniface*  
2 Tm 3:10-17 Mk 12:35-37

**Sat:** *Saint Norbert, Bishop*  
2 Tm 4:1-8 Mk 12:38-44

**Sun:** *The Most Holy Trinity*  
Ex 34:4b-6, 8-9 2 Cor 13:11-13 Jn 3:16-18

*Let our actions reflect the trust and peace that can only be found  
in Christ Jesus. Stay close to Jesus and the Blessed Mother in  
prayer, asking that those who are suffering from the disease or  
from related anxiety may find healing and peace. Amen*

St. Edward and St. Stephen News

A Prayer for Our New Bishop

*O God, eternal shepherd of the faithful, who tend your Church in countless ways and rule over her in love, grant, we pray, that Michael, your servant, whom you have set over your people, may preside in the place of Christ over the flock whose shepherd he is, and be faithful as a teacher of doctrine, a Priest of sacred worship and as one who serves them by governing. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

*(Roman Missal: “Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions,” no. 3)*

**Respect Life Corner**—In Acts 16, we learn that Paul and Timothy had plans to preach the gospel message to the people of Asia, but they were prevented by the Holy Spirit from doing so. The surely wondered and were not told why. Still, it didn’t prevent them from continuing their mission to proclaim the gospel message. They headed to other areas. Phrygia and Galatia. Their experiences remind us how during uncertainty we are called to do what we can with what we are given. It is our job to “bloom where we are planted”-even if it feels as though we have been planted for a while!  
**Learn, Act, Connect and Pray**—To nurture our spiritual lives, consider adding a daily online Mass or an extra Mass to spend some extra time with our Lord. It will certainly elevate your at-home experience and is the ultimate for of “self-care.” Celebrate His love **for you** today!



Guadalupe Project: Anyone wishing to make a monetary contribution to the Guadalupe Project may place their donation in an envelope labeled “Guadalupe” and put it in the collection basket.

TO ALL PARISHIONERS: Someone is sending emails with my name on it. In case you receive any strange mails bearing my name, first verify its authenticity by calling me at this number 618-641-8978 before responding. Thank you - Fr. Charles

**RCIA – Rite of Christian Initiation** If you want to know about our faith, or would like to join us, contact Father Charles at 618-662-6261, Cheryl McCarty at 815-343-1502, Ginny Barrett at 618-335-6926, or Mary Murphy at 618-599-5018

**Announcement:** Due to COVID-19 AND THE UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES – THE CSMA FUND FOR MINISTRY HAS EXTENDED ITS DEADLINE TO TURN IN APPLICATIONS. THE NEW DEADLINE IS MAY 31.

*One thing I ask of the Lord, and this I long, to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. That should be our daily prayer. That should be our daily desire. That should be our daily wish.*

St. Stephen News

Let us pray for our parishioners Andrew Koester and Olivia Mintun, as they prepare to get married on June 27. Andrew and Olivia will be married at St. Anthony’s in Effingham. May God bless them with their future plans.

May Birthday: Clara Harvey – May 28<sup>th</sup>.

There are several chalk boards that will be removed from the walls in the Social Room before repainting the room. If interested in purchasing the boards. contact Deb Duquaine. Bids will be accepted.

If you would like to contribute to the cemetery fence fund, please place your donation in an envelope marked 'cemetery fence.' and drop it in the collection basket. Thank you.

The next three Altar Society rotating chairmen are: Beth Fancher, Jill Fehrenbacher, Mary Beth Lancaster/Susan Schroeder.

**MASS INTENTIONS** If you would like to have a mass intention said for a loved one who has passed, special intention or blessings received, please place name of intention and \$10 in an envelope and drop in the collection basket. If you would like specific date, try to get the information to Trudi as soon as possible.

**Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)** If you or someone you know would like to learn more about the Catholic Church, or is interested in joining or returning to the Church, contact Father Charles 662-6261 or Cheryl McCarty 815-343-1502.

**Prayer Chain:** When a parishioner has an intention & requests prayers, Erin Pierce will initiate the prayer chain. She will contact Fr. Charles, who will determine the prayers. An email will be sent to all members, who will pray for the intentions. Each member should endeavor to assure the obligation is met. Call Erin 662-2266 erinmp1968@aol.com

**Do you like to sew?** Would you enjoy spending a little time sewing with an old-fashioned sewing circle? Clay County Health Department's hospice program is in need of lap quilts for hospice patients. They provide the fabric. All you need is a sewing machine and sewing notions. We would gather in the Social Room to visit and sew. You've never made a quilt but would like to come? No problem. We will teach you. Call Cheryl McCarty, 815-343-1502 for more information.

Please let Beth Fancher or Trudi Herdes know what dates you are celebrating birthdays, anniversaries or any special events i.e. births, graduations, marriage, etc.). We would like to put these dates in the bulletin.

**SCRIP:** Please consider purchasing SCRIP cards after weekend Masses. There are several retailers & restaurants participating in the program. St. Ann's buys the cards at a discounted rate and sells them at full face value. When you buy a card you receive a card worth the purchase price. Contact Erin or shopwithscrip.com.

St. Edward News

IF YOU WISH TO WATCH FATHER CHARLES SAY SUNDAY MASS: It will be live streamed between 10:45-11:00am (depending on arrival time of Father). It will be on Facebook under David Michael Mills Facebook page.

THANK-YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HAVE BEEN MAILING OR DROPPING IN THE MAIL BOX, THEIR WEEKLY DONATIONS. IT IS VERY MUCH APPRECIATED.

With anticipation of moving forward in opening St. Edward for Sunday Liturgies, a committee was formed and met this past week. In the next few weeks will do our best to keep you informed of the processs and what will be expected. You may be contacted to serve on one of the committees. We will need volunteers to have the reopening to go smoothly. One thing we are in need of now is hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray, and disinfectant wipes. If our out and about and see any of this and are able to pick something up it would be greatly appreciated.

PENTECOST SUNDAY

*Many and one.* There are many spiritual gifts and many forms service. True. But there is one Spirit, one Lord, on God making it all possible. And one Church—many people made one because of Baptism into Christ. He is the Risen One, standing in our midst, saying: “Peace be with you.”

~Because of Baptism, what gifts do I have?

~How will these gifts spill over into service, into mercy works?

~How can I share the peace of Christ with one or two others this week?

CATHOLIC TRIVIA: The Seven Set Feasts

**The Three Great Festivals:** When males were required to be presented to God

**1)Passover (Pesach)** or Festival of Unleavened Bread; Ex 23:14, Lv 23:4-14; begun on the eve of the fourteenth Nisan; the festival of redemption and deliverance

**2)Pentecost (Shavuot)** or Festival of Weeks (or Harvest, or First Fruits); Ex 23:16, Dt 16:9; sixth Sivan (fiftieth day after Passover); spring feast of thanks; ends the weeks of the grain harvest; a covenant renewal

**3)Tabernacles (Sukkot)** or Feast of Ingathering (or Booths); Ex 23:16, Lv 23:33-43; begun on the eve of fifteenth Tishri; celebrates the autumn harvest with thankfulness and merrymaking

**The Two Festivals of Awe:**

**1)Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)** or Day of Awe; Nm 29:1, Lv 23:23-25; first and second Tishri; Jewish New Year, contrition; begins the most solemn month on the Jewish calendar

**2)Atonement (Yom Kippur)** or Day of Awe; Lv 23:26-32, also Lv 10:1-2,16 tenth Tishri; Great Day of the year, fast day, repentance; the day the scapegoat is sent into the wilderness to die for the people’s sins; the high priest enters the holy of holies

**The Two Lesser Festivals**

**1)Feast of Lights (Hanukkah)** or Dedication; 1 Mac 4:36, Jn 10:22; twenty-fifth Chislev; lasting eight days; commemorates the revolt and victory of the Hasmoneans; celebrates religious liberty and patriotism; a Hanukkah game of chance uses a dreidel.

**2)Purim** or Mordecai Day; Book of Esther; fourteenth Adar; Jewish deliverance; celebrates with pageantry and satire the deliverance of the Jews from death by the bravery of the Persian queen, Esther.

. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO REOPEN OUR CHURCH, ST. STEPHEN!

St. Stephen Church will be reopening soon! By now you should have received an email from Father Charles outlining the steps that have been taken to prepare for Phase I and Phase IA. Our goal is to be ready to go by June 1. WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!! Of most importance at this time is the cleaning and sanitizing of the church. Initially we will need a large crew to prepare the church. We plan to do this on Saturday, May 30 beginning at 9:00 a.m. and working until noon or completion. Once this heavy cleaning is completed, maintenance cleaning will take much less time and need fewer volunteers. Please, please volunteer to help with this task by calling or emailing Laura Whitehead at 618-599-6786 or [laura.whitehead.91@gmail.com](mailto:laura.whitehead.91@gmail.com). You must be younger than 65 with no underlying health concerns. To volunteer for the Greeting Committee, text Justin Fleener at 618-508-5089. To volunteer for the Set- Up Team call or email Sam Pierce at 618-676-4966 or [sam.pierce.jr@gmail.com](mailto:sam.pierce.jr@gmail.com). For Laura Whitehead at [laura.whitehead.91@gmail.com](mailto:laura.whitehead.91@gmail.com) or 618-599-6786 or Cheryl McCarty at 815-343-1502 or [cmccarty617@gmail.com](mailto:cmccarty617@gmail.com).

PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING CLEANING SANITIZING SUPPLIES FOR THE REOPENING OF OUR CHURCH!

You may call Cheryl McCarty or Laura Whitehead if you need to have supplies picked up. Thank you.

Subject: Reopening Plan for St Stephen Church Flora amid COVID-19

Hello St Stephen family,

I pray that you and your loved ones are healthy. As you may have seen, Bishop Braxton, together with Cardinal Cupich and the Bishops of Illinois recently shared their multi-phased plan for reopening churches in the six dioceses of Illinois. Specifically, Phase I allows for parishes to reopen for Baptism, Reconciliation, Weddings and Funerals with a limit of 10 attendees (excluding ministers).

Phase IA allows for parishes to reopen for private prayer and adoration with a limit of 10 attendees (excluding ministers).

Phase II allows for reopening for weekday and weekend Masses for larger groups depending on the guidelines from the state and the capacity of the church building. We do not have a timetable for Phase II, but no weekday or Sunday Masses with a congregation of any size are allowed until we reach this phase.

Our St Stephen Church Reopening Plan First and foremost, it is important for everyone to understand that our efforts will prioritize the safety and wellbeing of all while maintaining due respect and reverence for the sacraments and liturgical norms of our faith.

I will assemble a Parish Reopening Leadership Team to lead our efforts. Together, we will attend required training to ensure that our parish reopening plan conforms to the guidelines developed by the diocese in collaboration with civil and healthcare authorities. We will also assemble a starter kit of protective and cleaning supplies, as well as guidance on purchasing/maintaining supplies ongoing.

**Volunteers Needed** We will need volunteers to assist with various aspects of our parish reopening plan. Importantly, leadership team members and volunteers should not be part of a “vulnerable population” (that is, not over the age of 65; no underlying medical condition such as diabetes; lung disease; undergoing cancer treatment, etc.), if possible. I ask all of you who are younger than 65 and healthy with no underlying health conditions to consider assisting with one of three reopening teams:

**Set-up team.** Sample duties include ensuring that all supplies needed for each sacramental celebration/gathering are ready for use, entrances and exits are marked and propped physically open prior to attendees’ arrival, departure, windows are opened, etc.

**Greeting team.** Sample duties include assisting in managing the flow of congregants as they enter the church, making sure attendees use hand sanitizer upon entering, are wearing a mask, and are reminded not to enter if ill; directing people to appropriate seating/waiting areas, etc.

**Cleaning team.** Sample duties include maintaining and cleaning essential and trafficked areas of the church before and after the church has been used. Masks and gloves will be provided, if you do not have your own, in addition to approved cleaning/disinfecting supplies.

**Templates for Parish Communications Re: Church Reopening Amid COVID-19** The Reopening Leadership Team and I will make sure that all volunteers are properly trained. Please send us a message at [cmccarty617@gmail.com](mailto:cmccarty617@gmail.com) ; [laura.whitehead.91@gmail.com](mailto:laura.whitehead.91@gmail.com); [fronyekaanyaoku@yahoo.com](mailto:fronyekaanyaoku@yahoo.com) to indicate your willingness and ability to volunteer. From those that step forward, we will also request that some act as volunteer captains to help lead each of the three teams.

**Timing for Our Reopening** As I mentioned, the Parish Reopening Leadership Team members and I will need to complete required training, which will take place late in the week of May 17. Once we complete the training, we will need to review and complete tasks assigned to all parishes as part of the reopening process provided by the diocese. Therefore, the soonest that any parish in the diocese will realistically open for sacramental celebrations (weddings, funerals, reconciliation) is likely the weekend of May 30; private prayer or Eucharistic Adoration, will follow when we are ready. However, our parish, like all others in the diocese, will move forward at a pace and timing appropriate for its own situation.

Following our training webinar, at St. Stephen, we will only open our church once the Reopening Leadership Team and I feel confident that we have the right volunteers in place to make it possible to reopen. Again, the need for parishioner assistance cannot be overstated.

The guidelines and measures required to reopen are designed to protect our wellbeing and that of our broader community. As we learn from the first pages of Scripture, we indeed are “our brother’s keeper.” Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed, “that they all may be one” (Jn 17:21) and commanded us “love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (Jn 13:34). Our collective patience, willingness to help and the care we take to reopen is a demonstration of our unity and love for one another.

May God grant you His peace during this difficult time and may He manifest His love and presence to you in abundant ways. If you have any questions, please contact me at St Stephen Parish office  
Sincerely yours in Christ, Fr Charles Anyaoku

**THE FEAST OF PENTECOST THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CHURCH** Dear brothers and sisters in Christ , on the Pentecost Sunday we celebrate the Jesus ’s gift of the Holy Spirt to the Church and to each of the baptized . It is the birthday of the church or the beginning of the church. We celebrate this feast on the fiftieth day after Christ ’resurrection and ten days his ascension into heaven when the holy spirit descended on the Apostles and empowered and emboldened them to take up the mission of Jesus , to go out to the entire world and preach the Gospel . Pentecost feast marks the end of Easter celebration. Tomorrow our liturgy reverts to the ordinary time .

In today ’s gospel ,John 20:19-23, the Church recalls the power Jesus has given the apostles to forgive sin, knowing well that many will stumble and fall due to human frailty. This enables the Church to continue to restore the fallen to God’s law and helps us to continue to live as God’s children despite the human weakness . He did this by breathing on them , that is , recreating by giving them new life as God did in Genesis when He created the first man ( cf. Gen2:7).

Here, the Church reminds us the importance of the sacrament of Penance or reconciliation which has been given to the Church which enables them to approach God for forgiveness of sins and renewal of souls. It is necessary we frequent our confession because, there ,we receive the gift of God’s love and forgiveness .

However , the Holy Spirit gives us Courage to ask for forgiveness of sin and call God Abba Father . Again , it is the Holy Spirit who empowers us to preach , speak in the name of Jesus Christ . Though , in the scripture ,Jesus promised his disciples that the Spirit his father would send to them in his name would teach them everything .

Today , the Church recalls the powerful events in Jerusalem on that first Pentecost Sunday .When the disciples were frightened and fearful behind locked doors , and how in a dramatic way they received the Holy Spirit in tongues of fire . They spoke in the language which everyone comprehended in their native languages. They became confident, bold and courageous to teach and spread the word of God without fear . Specifically , the Spirit comes to reunite and reconcile with God.

The Church reminds us that the Spirit is not limited to Old Testament prophets and Church leaders. It is given to all of us in Baptism and strengthened in Confirmation. That Spirit we have received is not passive but active , not a spirit of slavery but it has made us God ’s children , which enables us to receive the spirit of freedom , power and self -control. Jesus promised his disciple The spirit of truth and power.

Again , Jesus tells his disciples , “ Do not be afraid , the spirit will lead you and guide you to all truth . The spirit , in the Church today is ever present in the Church and also in the sacraments .

Moreover , the Holy Spirit is present today whenever we manifest courage in living the Gospel , when we open our heart in prayer, when we reach out to another , when we make nice choices, when we deepen our knowledge of the Lord. The Holy spirit , as we say in the creed , the Lord and giver of life to the church and to our soul.

The Holy Spirit is a source of renewal of life , and also aiding us in our prayers . He knows our limitations and weakness, therefore he intercedes with inexpressible groanings... according to God’s will .( Romans:8;22). To renew our lives , we don’t read many books but we do have to open ourselves to the holy spirit, the deep down freshness that resides in each of us.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit Come, Holy Spirit, come! And from your celestial home Shed a ray of light divine! Come, Father of the poor! Come, source of all our store! Come, within our bosoms shine. You, of comforters the best; You, the soul’s most welcome guest; Sweet refreshment here below; In our labor, rest most sweet; Grateful coolness in the heat; Solace in the midst of woe. O most blessed Light divine, Shine within these hearts of yours, And our in most being fill! Where you are not, we have naught, Nothing good in deed or thought, Nothing free from taint of ill. Heal our wounds, our strength renew; On our dryness pour your dew; Wash the stains of guilt away: Bend the stubborn heart and will; Melt the frozen, warm the chill; Guide the steps that go astray. On the faithful, who adore And confess you, evermore In your sevenfold gift descend; Give them virtue’s sure reward; Give them your salvation, Lord; Give them joys that never end. Amen. Alleluia.

**Living the Word This Week**

*How can I make my life a gift for others in charity? Become involved in parish or diocesan evangelization efforts.*