

And then Bishop Donald Kettler ordaining me a priest. Each and every Sacrament a grace!

In anticipation of the paschal feasts, priests are invited to join their brother priests, deacons and bishop to renew their ordination promises at the Chrism Mass. The songs, the smell of the incense, the prayers and promises all bring me back to that day when I said yes at the Lord's altar to serve as His priest. It is a decision I have never regretted.

These days of Lent can be for us a preparation to renew our own baptismal promises, which we shall do at the Easter Vigil or Easter Sunday services. We don't make sacrifices for their own sake. These prayers, fastings and almsgivings orient our thoughts and desires toward God, and remind us that we are Christians first. They make room in us to receive Him in Blessed Sacrament. They help us to better understand and appreciate the gift we are receiving at Mass.

Speaking to a friend the other day, a non-Catholic who was asking about the Faith, I said to her with joy and gratitude, "I get to hold Jesus in my hands every day." What a gift! And yet, what a gift to know it is a gift. What makes Easter, Sacraments ... our Faith so special is recognizes the gift that it is. The gift that Jesus is.

If you have not yet attended an Easter Vigil celebration, you might consider making this year your year. Not only because I have requested champagne, punch and cake for the reception afterwards, but because of how it begins with the Easter Exultet. It is a beautiful hymn which recounts the reason for our celebration; why this is the most solemn night and day of the year for Christians around the world! I am always particularly struck by the words at the hymns crescendo:

*"O wonder of your humble care for us!
O love, O charity beyond all telling,
to ransom a slave you gave away your Son!"*

And now, more than a slave, more than a servant, God calls us his daughters and sons; our Lord Jesus call His disciples His friends. And may we ever be.

This weekend we commemorate *laudete* (praise/glory) Sunday, the halfway point to Easter. May the remainder of this season be for you a time of deep prayer, lasting conversion and a preparation for the joy which we shall celebrate anew this Easter season.

Many thanks to the members of our parish finance councils who were able to join for our joint meeting this past Tuesday. I was immensely grateful because, that night as I looked around the room

FATHER MITCHELL'S PASTORAL BULLETIN

Sunday, March 15, 2026

To the parishioners of Saint Andrew's, Greenwald,
Saint John the Baptist's, Meire Grove, Saint Mary's, Melrose &
Saint Michael's, Spring Hill, of the One In Faith Area Catholic Community

at those men and women who have been elected and chosen to give guidance and leadership to parish operations, and counsel to me, I truly felt they were more than worthy of the call they accepted.

Our conversation was comprehensive, candid, heartfelt, and respectful. What began as a one and a half hour meeting lasted two (and everyone had permission to leave at the hour and a half mark!).

During our meeting I presented the 15-month transition plan which will guide us through the anticipated merger and closures. These will be available on the oneinfaith.org website no later than noon on Sunday, March 15. They may be found in the 'All Things New' tab, found on the main page. My strong recommendation is for each of us to read all of the materials, totally, which are being provided to our transition sub-committee teams.

As always, please pray for the process and for one another during this time of change.

O Holy Mary, blessed among women, pray for us.

In Christ,

Father Mitchell Bechtold

Greetings.

We are nearing the Paschal celebrations of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil. This solemn time to remember the life and love, the death and resurrection of our Lord, is made especially beautiful since this is the ordinary time in which the Church receives into her fold those who have been preparing for full reception into the Church. These men and women, by the grace of God, shall soon enjoy the grace in which we already share to be a son or daughter of our Heavenly Father.

I think back on the big Sacraments of my life and I remember every one, and each and every one was special. Fr. Slominski giving me First Holy Communion at Saint Wendelin's in Luxemburg. Bishop John Kinney anointing my head with Sacred Chrism at my Confirmation. Bishop Kinney later bestowing on me a share in the wonderful Sacrament of Holy Orders when he ordained me a deacon.