



# SAINT ELIZABETH ANN SETON CATHOLIC CHURCH

Dear Friends,

One of my favorite scenes at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton occurs every year at the First Communion Masses. When the children walk up to receive the Eucharist for the first time, their parents accompany them. But, every year a child will walk up and the entire extended family will spill out of the pew: parents and siblings, grandparents and godparents, aunts and uncles. Every person connected to this child has this immense desire to see this child receive the sacrament of God.

Each of us equally desires to see this child and every child receive the sacraments of baptism, reconciliation, the eucharist, and confirmation. Our children are a reminder of our continuing life of faith, and they are the focus of our parish mission as we move forward.

The beauty of the scene that I described is amplified when we look at the number of children who are making their first communion at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. When I arrived here as pastor in 2008, there were 20 children making the sacrament and we needed only one Mass to accommodate them and their families. I am happy to announce that this spring 110 children made their First Communion and we added five additional Masses to provide for them and their families this life-changing sacrament.

This growth in the number of children making their first communion illustrates what is occurring on a larger parish level.

### **St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is growing!**

As I write this letter we currently have over 2,550 families registered. Every week new families are looking for a place to meet God, a place to hear the Gospel, a place to celebrate the Eucharist. Families new to our area are looking for a Catholic church to call their spiritual home.

Five years ago the Parish Council, recognizing that there was an influx of growth and development in our area, commissioned a demographic study that outlined in detail extent of this growth. In 2000 there were over 5,000 households in our parish boundaries. In 2015 the number of households surged to over 12,000. By 2020 the number of households is expected to surpass 25,000.

**We anticipate our parish registrations to well exceed 4,000 families by 2020.**



All of our programs at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton will be impacted by this growth. Most of the new families moving into our parish are young couples with children. Presently we have 700 children attending one of our Faith Formation programs. By 2020 we project that number to increase to 1,400 children. Our facilities are utilized every day and evening of the week and soon will be inadequate for the number of families who are joining our parish. It is obvious that we need to extend our current programs, provide adequate facilities and solve parking issues that will arise.

**We see this growth in our community as our time of evangelization. This evangelization is our new mission, our new calling.**

The history of the Catholic Church is the history of missionaries going throughout the world to bring the Gospel to distant places. We are likewise being called to this same missionary work in our own neighborhoods. We are embarking on a journey, a spiritual journey, to bring the Gospel and the sacraments to many people.

**Bringing the Gospel and sacraments to hundreds of people is the work of all the people.**

Evangelization at this level is a total parish effort and not just the work of the parish council and staff. As new parishioners are welcomed into our parish WE will baptize their children and WE will give them the gift of the sacraments. WE will be the place for them to nurture their faith and strengthen their relationship with God.

Soon we will be calling upon you to join our mission. Each of you will be asked to be the Joseph and Mary, the welcoming arms for those who come to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton seeking a community that opens the doors of God's Church to His people.

I look forward to sharing with you in this series of letters the ways we are being proactive in welcoming our new parishioners and our proposals for ensuring that St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is prepared to serve our community.

Sincerely,



Fr. Conor J. McGrath

