

Nov. 18, 2018

Thoughts from the pastor,

I hope you are all ready for Thanksgiving, for it is coming soon. I hope this holiday weekend will be a positive time for all of you. Not everyone has family joy to connect to in our home but we always have our parish family to pray with. On Thanksgiving morning the Mass will be at 8:30am and there will be a blessing of the food as usual.

The other news is that the joint parish council meeting with SJ & SEAS was on Tuesday. This was the meeting in which we were to look at how it would work share clergy with St. James. There was a lot of discussion which covered a lot of what I emailed to most of you this past week and also brought up at last weekend's Masses. I won't go over all of that again but the result is that our Mass schedule will be changing. There will be no change to the weekend schedule, which is a blessing. The change will be that eventually the SEAS 7am Mass will be dropped for weekdays. This is frustrating but the other alternatives all left too many days of double duty. Since SEAS has the only evening Mass in the area, it was thought that this was important to continue. This is especially important in terms of the 5pm confessions each evening. This, like the Mass, is a service for the whole area.

One bonus aspect of this is that I will be bringing back the Friday evening Mass on a regular basis and not just for Lent. This will be possible because Fr. Tom thought that one of the St. James priests could handle the Monday evening confessions and Mass most of the time because I still want to have a chance to get a day off that is actually a day away, just like I was attempting when Fr. Don was here. The other Mass that the St. James priests will be covering occasionally will be the SEAS Sunday evening Mass at 5:30. This will give them a chance to interact with the youth group. It will also make it so occasionally some of my weekends will not be two more 12-14 hour days. I will not be taking out the 7am Masses immediately. My thought at this point is that I will cancel the Tuesday and Thursday morning Masses starting with Advent. So the first ones to actually be cancelled will be Dec. 4 & 6. During Advent there will still be a communion service on Mondays and there will be Mass and confessions on Wednesday and Friday mornings. Part of my reasoning for this is that we have people coming from different parishes that have been depending on confessions here in the mornings, and right now I don't have an alternative for them. Boys Town has confessions at 10:30am each weekday. St. Bernard has confessions on Tuesday-Friday from 7:30-7:45am. I am hoping one of the closer parishes might pick up weekday morning confessions. I haven't approached them yet.

There are weekday morning Masses at 6:30 at St. James, 6:40 at St. Leo, and 6:45 at St. Vincent de Paul. Maybe one of those parishes could have morning confessions. Boys Town cancelled their 7am weekday Mass, so they won't be of help. Probably after Jan. 1st it would work to drop the other 7am weekday services at SEAS, except for Holydays. That schedule will still be 7am, 12:10pm, and 7pm. This year I will have the following Christmas Masses. 4pm, 6:30pm, midnight, 8am, & 11am. This is still a heavy schedule but I will watch attendance and see if they are all needed for future years.

I will still be having Masses for the SJS school children and at the three nursing homes that are in our boundaries. What has to be worked out with St. James will be how many Masses they will be able to help with when I am gone. That will be tested out in January when I go to Mundelein for my class on the 14th -- 18th. I beg your patience as we work on this. It will be a test of faith for all of you who have been so faithful to the weekday morning Mass at SEAS. I wish there were more

priests to cover that longer, but the reality is that it is still going to be the continuing question of how long St. James will have a second priest. Stay tuned.

I did want to bring up another aspect of the consequences of child sexual abuse when it is with family members. For it is not just the abused child that pays a price. The whole family is affected. This is especially the case when the abuser is a family member. Statistically dads are more of a risk than priests. This is one of the reasons that few people take it seriously when people say that if priest could just be married, there wouldn't be this mess. Actually it would just be a bigger mess. When dads and stepdads are the abusers it creates the biggest trauma.

That trauma spreads to each member of the family. If the abuser is the dad, then the next person to feel the pain is the mother. All emotionally healthy parents wants to protect their children. Sometimes it can take years for abuse to come to the surface; but when it does, the mother feels like she has failed to protect her child. She then has to figure out a way to keep that child safe in the future. Even if the abuser leaves there is usually some contact that is either pleaded for, or threatened, by the abuser. This is made even worse by the abused child who may not even trust the non-abusive parent because they have already failed to protect them.

Small children believe that parents know everything so they would believe that the mother would have known about this situation and failed to do anything about it. Even if the child was being threatened by the abuser to keep everything a secret, the child would begin to be angry with the mother who keeps leaving the abuser and the abused to go off to other activities. The abused child feels isolated and betrayed by the non-abusive parent.

Depending on when they find out, the other children find themselves in difficult situations. If they haven't been abused themselves, they might not believe their sibling because they experience their dad, who is alleged to be an abuser, in a totally different way. This creates even more mistrust in the family. One of the ones who can end up paying a price in this is the abused child; because they have an abusive dad, a mother that they see as untrustworthy, and siblings who just don't understand and probably try to turn everyone back into one big happy family.

In the case that the abuser is a male child, rather than the dad, the situation takes on different dimensions. What do loving parents do when they find out their son has become an abuser? Many would blame themselves. Others would try to find some other cause that might have triggered this behavior, which might have actually been another family member like a grandparent, uncle, or cousin. Most of us want to give people the benefit of the doubt but we also want everyone to be safe. It can take decades to heal many of these wounds.

A huge problem that our society and church face is what kind of punishment should the abuser face in this kind of crime? The issue of the statute of limitations becomes a real problem. What should be done about a person who may not have done anything wrong for decades and yet has ruined one or more lives? If threats had been made to keep things a secret, this could give even more reasons for the victim to keep silent until it is too late to bring a civil punishment out for the abuser. The church has to face this now with so many cases in which the statute of limitations has expired. Do the abusers get off scott free? Does it matter if they have lived decades without any other infractions? At this point the church has been requiring that the priest leave active ministry and live the rest of their lives in penance and prayer for victims. What should our society do to non-priests? There are a lot of questions that need to be answered as we try to get to the roots of these issues.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank