

*Announcement made by Fr. Nick before his Sunday Homily*

REGARDING MY SEPTEMBER, 2024 LETTER  
TO ALL REGISTERED PARISHIONERS

**LET US HEAR FROM YOU...** It has been seven years since we updated our list of registered parishioners, and three years since the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted and we went back to having public Masses. Prior to COVID, our average Sunday Mass attendance was 650 people. Since COVID, the very first week of public Masses, we only had 300 people return to regular Sunday Mass. This number was consistent for two years.

That number is slowly inching its way upward to 400 to 450 people per weekend. Attendance at the 11:00 AM Sunday Mass has gone from 100 to 200! Thanks be to God! And thanks be to YOU! We are growing! Please ignore any rumors that our parish is closing.

We would like to hear from those 200 folks who still have not yet returned to Mass.

I sent a letter to all registered parish households, especially to our absent brothers and sisters, asking them to prayerfully consider returning to Sunday Mass, tell us why they are not coming, or to let us know if their spiritual needs are being met elsewhere.

***I ask ALL of you to return the response sheet*** so that we can begin an outreach to everyone to come “Back in the Pews” and to update our parish records. Thank you!

At the end of the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis, Indiana in July, all American Catholics – including US – were invited and challenged to “Walk with One” person who is away from the practice of the Faith and to invite them back to their spiritual home. Whom will YOU invite and accompany “Back in the Pew?” Ask the Holy Spirit to help you find them!

*(Fr. Nick’s Homily for the 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time follows.)*

Genesis 2:18-24; Psalm 128; Hebrews 2:9-11; Mark 10:2-16]

Throughout the United States this weekend, we observe our annual “Respect Life” Sunday. We also begin October as Respect Life Month, and the Month of Our Lady’s Holy Rosary. It is a reminder of the call, each responsible Catholic has, to address the moral dilemmas of how to care for our aging members, the value of the unborn, the rightful place of those who are mentally or physically different, the rights of the undocumented alien, our responsibility toward the economically disadvantaged and the preservation of sacramental marriage and the family.

Tom McGrath is a veteran Catholic publisher, recently retired from Loyola Press. He is author of [Raising Faith-Filled Kids](#).

He says this: “I’ve been married dozens of times -- all to the same woman. In any relationship, you have to keep committing and recommitting as times and circumstances change and you come to know more about your partner and yourself. And, so a marriage is not a wedding day but a series of decisions to be for and with the other person “for better or for worse.” Love is not an emotion. It’s a choice.

“Sometimes the internal recommitment comes when you notice your attention drifting away to competing interests. Sometimes it comes after a fight. Sometimes it takes the form of deciding to fight to deal with all those resentments you’ve both been storing up. And sometimes you look across the dinner table and recognize the person you fell in love with long ago, and that memory re-energizes your life together.

Through the years, there will be plenty of opportunities to let your relationships wither and die. Yet the invitation is not just to endure but to access the love that once called you, to enter again into the dreams of your younger days, and to let your loving commitment blossom and grow in the midst of today's reality -- however difficult that might be. This is the ideal. We all fall short, giving us yet more opportunities to renew those commitments to the best of our ability.

The promise at the heart of marriage is the promise God makes to each of us: "Whenever it comes time to decide again, it's a foregone conclusion that I will always and everywhere side with you."

Just as Jesus worked His first miracle at the request of His Blessed Mother at Cana by turning water into wine, so too does Jesus transform those choppy waters of tension, trial, temptation and turmoil into a vintage wine of tried-and-true trust in marriage.

Historians, sociologists, psychologists and anthropologists all agree that the normative relationship for a man and woman's existence is that of husband, and wife, father and mother, and then home, industry, finance, culture, society and governing structures are more easily directed to virtue, responsibility and the restraint of the primitive lust and selfishness that wreak civilization.

Destroyed marriages mean destroyed families; destroyed families means destroyed neighborhoods; destroyed neighborhoods means destroyed cities, and destroyed cities means a destroyed nation.

Divorce among Catholic couples is only about 1/3, whereas the national average is now 55% among couples in general.

A couple married 50 years was asked the secret of their marriage. He said, "To keep our relationship fresh, we go out twice a week. I go out on Tuesday nights; she goes out on Thursday nights!

To keep the flame of faith alive in your marriage, I ask you to consider the various retreat opportunities for married couples. There is Marriage Encounter.

You will learn why marriage is reflected in nature and in the Church as the union of one man (Christ) to one woman (the Church.) And how if that is truly a sacramental union, it can never be broken.

And here is the key. If, God forbid, the marriage falls apart and ends in divorce, through the annulment process, a marriage is proven not to be truly a sacramental union, even if it takes place in a Catholic church. With an annulment, the Catholic parties are free to attempt marriage again, with someone else.

The annulment says what Jesus says in today's Gospel: IF you are married and divorced, you need an annulment. The annulment process which is the answer to Jesus' admonition in Matthew Ch. 16: "Whoever divorces, except for sexual immorality – and marries another, commits adultery." This is the situation of a couple without an annulment. Your prior union to your former spouse WAS a legal union; all children of that union ARE very much legitimate offspring, and the divorced person IS NOT automatically excommunicated.

What does the annulment say? It judges that based on the testimony of the person requesting the annulment, the testimony of the former spouse who is invited to participate in the annulment process; based on the testimony of five or more witnesses which

YOU select, and based on the examination of the staff of the Marriage Tribunal, it was not a sacramental marriage.

All involved parties agree that there is enough evidence to support that the marriage, while legal, was not sacramental.

Returning to the topic of Right to Life, and its place in our state, our country and our world, every Catholic voter needs to have a well-formed conscience when it comes to voting next month in the General Election taking place all across our nation.

I ask all Catholic voters to educate themselves, beginning by reading the Declaration of Independence and the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. In it, you will hear words like “unalienable rights given by the Creator” and that “all are created equal.” Our Founding Ancestors state most clearly that religion educates society, not that government gives us our basic rights. Our current American culture of death has it backwards and has it wrong.

Review the insert from a few weeks ago published by the Michigan Catholic Conference. It does not tell you whom to vote for, but to remember the moral principles of our Catholic Faith in making your choice.

A government without God or religion becomes totalitarian, dictatorial, fascist, and without a soul. We’ve seen that in Germany, Russia and now in China. You and I and every American make up the body that is America. The Spirit of God and our religion are America’s body and humanity’s soul. One cannot survive without them. May Mary, our Blessed Mother and the Protector of all life, pray for us, intercede for us, guide us and shield us with her motherly love. AMEN!