**The Cathedral Parish of the Immaculate Conception**

Encountering Christ in word, sacrament, and in each other,

we serve to create hope and peace for our community and world.

 January 21, 2021

Dear Friends,

 This Sunday, January 24th, we celebrate the Feast of St. Francis de Sales. He is one of the 34 Doctors of the Church. Francis was the Bishop of Geneva and great leader in the Counter-Reformation period. He lived outside the diocese, in Annecy, as the Calvinists ruled Geneva. To communicate with his people, he wrote various pamphlets encouraging them in the faith. He wrote thousands of letters to people whom he directed spiritually. Thus, he is the patron of the press, as well as patron of the deaf. Francis offered an optimistic, common sense spirituality encouraging us to “be who we are and be that well.” At the second Vatican Council, the Church proclaimed this “new” teaching that we were all called to holiness. Yet, for the “gentleman saint” Francis de Sales, he espoused this universal call to holiness in the 16th century in everything he wrote, preached and did. He encouraged us to recall the presence of God, to offer each present moment to God by directing our intention to God and to “Live Jesus.” His exhortation to live in the present moment continues to be a struggle for us. He taught that there was nothing we can do about the past (save leave it to God’s mercy) and we cannot control the future (as it may never be as we plan and we can leave this to God’s good providence). Live the present moment! Live today well! Years later, the Visitations Sisters, the Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales, and our congregation, the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales have continued to proffer his spirituality that quite frankly has never been more needed as it is today in these tumultuous times. We do this in parish ministry, education, hospital and police chaplaincy, service in mission territories, preaching retreats, spiritual direction, social Justice work (Fr. Mike McCue and his work with Joseph House, The Last Stop and DeSales Service Works) and many other avenues learning from Francis’ example. Our own Bro. Mickey spreads Salesian Spirituality throughout the world by his art, publications, conferences and retreats.

 On this feast, most Oblate parishes ask for an appeal from those to whom we minister, so that the Oblates may continue to survive and thrive. The majority of the funds go to our men living in our assisted care facility in Childs, MD. There are over 45 assigned there. Because of excellent diligence and care, they have never had a COVID-19 case yet! The other recipient of the Oblate appeal goes to the education of our brothers and seminarians in formation. In a sense, it supports “those on whose shoulders we stand” and those set to follow their great example. I believe you have received an envelope in your monthly mailing, but if you have not and are able to make a contribution, please place it in the second collection next week or mail it to the parish office.

 On behalf of all Oblates especially our retirees and those in formation, we thank you and include you all in our daily prayers. Without you, our benefactors, we could not preach the Gospel with compassion and without compromise.

Gratefully,

Michael Mickey John

Michael McCue, OSFS Mickey McGrath, OSFS John Fisher, OSFS