



From the Pastor's Desk

Father Anselm Smedile, O.S.B.

Fifth Sunday of Lent 2026

Look forward to holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

The above words are taken from Chapter 49 “on the observance of Lent” in the *Rule of Saint Benedict*. Saint Benedict reminds us that the true meaning of our Lenten observances is to prepare for the celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus by cooperating with God’s grace to transform our hearts, minds and lives. Our Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and works of charity or almsgiving, are meant to touch us in such a way as to help us love and live as Jesus loved and lived and continues to love and live through us who are his body. A love that is sacrificial and lifegiving. In these final weeks of Lent, we might ask ourselves if our Lenten practices are having an effect on our hearts. Do I sense a turning outward towards God and others in an ever-widening embrace or am I standing still? Am I just looking forward to Lent being over or am I encouraged by the movement of the Holy Spirit happening in my life? We might also ask ourselves how will we celebrate the Sacred Triduum or Sacred three days of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter? Please celebrate these most holy days of the church year by participating in the **Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday at 7 pm; The Passion of the Lord on Good Friday at 7 pm and the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday at 7:30 pm or Easter Sunday Mass at 9:30 am.**

I write this letter as an opportunity to update you on some of the good things happening in our community. With the Parish Council’s encouragement, Saint Raphael has begun a relationship with Rebuilt Parish (rebuiltparish.com). Rebuilt Parish is a parish renewal movement that is boldly impacting parishes across the Church and country, providing the process and tools we need to refocus on reaching the un-churched, creating a clear discipleship path to grow our parish, and revitalizing our parish culture. Parish life is different now. Much different from what many of us experienced growing up. I believe Rebuilt Parish will help us deepen our faith and grow in our discipleship. Please visit their website to learn more and consider how you can contribute to rebuilding our beloved Saint Raphael Parish.

Our Finance Council is preparing for a review by the Diocese of Manchester of our compliance with diocesan finance procedures and internal controls. It is a laborious process with much attention to detail needed. We already conduct an annual external financial audit because of our close association with Saint Anselm Abbey. I believe we are the only parish or one of a very few that has an annual external audit of its financial books. It is important that we practice good stewardship of the resources entrusted to us. I am grateful for those who are assisting and preparing for this important review and all of you who so generously support Saint Raphael.

This **Tuesday, March 24th at 6pm**, nine of our young parishioners will celebrate the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. The Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Francis Christian at Saint Lawrence Parish in Goffstown. They will become fully initiated Catholics, and I hope will continue to grow and mature as disciples of the Lord Jesus. Let us support them with our prayers, encouragement and the example of our own Christian lives.

Sometime after Easter, the carpeting in the main sanctuary area will be replaced with the same style as has been installed in the chapel and baptistry. I believe the original carpeting has been there since around 1990 and has served us very well. Handrails will be installed on the reredos for better ease and safety of those who assist at Mass. I am sorry to report that several people have fallen and been injured in the recent past. I hope the new handrails will help. The stained-glass windows of Saint Patrick and Saint Brigid have been relocated to the baptistry. They will be connected by a newly constructed “ambry” or dedicated cabinet for the Holy Oils (Sacred Chrism, Oil of Catechumens, and Oil of the Sick) for the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Anointing of the Sick. The ambry will be lighted and allow for proper display and ease of use. The location of the stained-glass windows in the baptistry is appropriate as they both express “baptismal imagery”. The window of Saint Patrick baptizing the Irish chieftain is obvious but the image of Saint Brigid receiving the monastic habit is also appropriate. The reception of the monastic habit and profession of vows has always been viewed in Christian monastic spirituality and tradition as a type of “second baptism”. I am grateful to the volunteers who have shared their gifts and considerable talents in the relocation and construction.

Saint Raphael will host an International Exhibit of Eucharistic Miracles **April 11-13th**. A special focus will be on Saint Carlo Acutis (1990-2006) who was canonized a saint by Pope Leo XIV. Saint Carlo is the first person of the millennial generation to be canonized a saint. The exhibit will include presentations on Saint Carlo and Saint Manuel Gonzalez Garcia. I am grateful for a parish friend and volunteer who has helped to bring this exhibit to Saint Raphael.

I hope you all will join us to celebrate Easter and our Community with a special spaghetti supper on **Monday, April 13th**. The supper will be hosted by Saint Anselm College students involved in our Community Center. It will be a great opportunity to see the Community Center in action and to learn about the many volunteer opportunities for parishioners to be disciples in action.

Much Peace,

Father Anselm, OSB

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Don't forget our upcoming **Care for Our Church** cleaning day on **Saturday, March 28th beginning at 7:30 am** with refreshments. Join parishioners and friends as we prepare our church for Holy Week and Easter. It's fun, organized and quick!