



strengthening our faith by rebuilding our heritage

January 29, 2020

Dear parishioner,

I hope that this letter finds you well. As parochial vicar at St. Matthew's, I deeply appreciate your involvement in the life and ministry of our parish. I and the rest of the parish staff could not accomplish anything without your generous support and contribution of time, talent, and treasure.

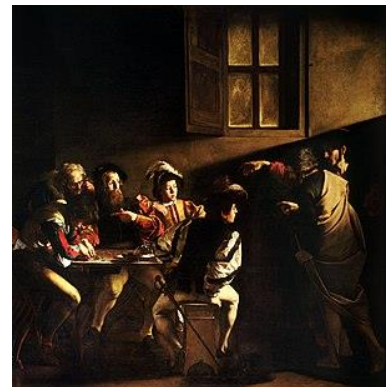
I am writing to invite you to attend a very special Lenten retreat for those who engage – or seek to engage – in the Social Justice and Community Service Ministries of the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle. The retreat will take place on Saturday, March 7, 2020 from 9:30 to 4:30 at the Franciscan Monastery Conference Center in Washington DC.

During the season of Lent, as we meditate on the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, we likewise cannot turn away our eyes from the anguish, fear, and pain of so many people around us: undocumented immigrants, parents struggling to feed their children and pay rent, homeless people and those who face the constant threat of eviction from their apartments, victims of human trafficking, unborn children deprived of legal protection. We also turn to the clamor of our sister-mother earth that is being ruthlessly treated, her ecosystems pushed to the brink of collapse. And yet, we are people of hope. We look forward to celebration of Easter and prepare ourselves to, once again, recommit ourselves to the life-restoring mission of Jesus. We are called to be hands and feet of Christ Jesus in our world today; to bring mercy, justice, ecological conversion, and healing to the world.

Our retreat will be led by Fr. Jacek Orzechowski, OFM. He currently works at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington in the area of Parish Community Organizing and Advocacy.

We will begin with a reflection on the famous painting of Caravaggio, "The Calling of Saint Matthew," and reflect on the experience of our own unique personal callings.

Fr. Jacek will then proceed to highlight a selection of passages from the Gospel of St. Matthew, opening up a conversation about how those passages can inform, challenge and inspire our Justice, Peace, Care for Creation and Community Service Ministries. To further enrich our retreat, he will draw on some of the insights from Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, whose 5th anniversary of promulgation we celebrate this year.



*"The Calling of Saint Matthew"
by Caravaggio*

The retreat will include time for individual and group reflection. We will also celebrate some of the transformative moments in our parish's outreach ministries, share our motivations and our dreams for an even more robust and prophetic presence of the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle in the life of our city and nation. Mass will be celebrated to close the retreat.

Since it is our desire to expand, deepen, and integrate our outreach ministries, we would like to ask you to consider extending a special invitation to one person you know. He or she may or may not even be a member of our parish yet. But, like Jesus in the painting of Caravaggio, you may see that person's sensitive, compassionate heart for the poor and marginalized, and passion for justice and care for our common home. Please, use the attached extra invitation card to invite that individual to our Lenten retreat. We especially hope for a diverse group of young adults to join our ranks.

Once again, thank you for all your faithful collaboration in the life and ministry of our parish. I hope you can save the date of our Lenten retreat and RSVP by using this link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0C4FADA9238-stmatthews> or to our committee chair Phil Downey (socialjusticestmatthew@gmail.com) no later than Monday March 2nd

Yours in Christ,



Fr. John Benson
Parochial Vicar
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