

HAPPY EASTER, THE FEAST OF HOPE CONTINUES AT ST. STEPHEN

Jesus in the tomb is one proof we have that darkness is not the enemy. Our greatest enemy is the unwillingness to believe in dawn, in resurrection. Hope is what keeps the soul alive in bad times; hope gives us strength to go on despite the darkness of the moment.

When we celebrate Easter as the feast of hope, this is what we proclaim: Hope is the foundation of happiness. It makes tomorrow a destination rather than simply grounds for the dread of disaster. Hope is the gift of God to us. The work it takes to make hope real is the gift we give back to God. Hope is the instinct in us that something greater than what now is, can become real. It is as much a call to respond as it is a sign of what is lacking. Hope is the cutting edge of vision. It tells us that, indeed, another world is possible but just over the horizon. Hope is not a free gift. It does not come without a cost. It requires us to earn it. Hope never solves anything. It simply opens a necessary door in the human enterprise and invites us, begs us, to walk through it—for our sake, of course, but for the sake of the world, as well. Hope is a quiet, whispered, wonderment saying over and over again in the heart of us, "Possibility, possibility, possibility."

Most of all, hope requires that we spin a few dreams for ourselves that are possible, doable and desirable. Then, all that's left is the doing of them.

AN EASTER MADE SPECIAL – THANK YOU TO SO MANY

We had a tremendous celebration of Holy Week and Easter! The Holy week ceremonies were truly prayerful and reverent. The Easter Liturgies were joyous! As St. Augustine said so long ago, "*We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song!*"

None of the solemnity, beauty and glory of Holy Week and Easter is possible without the hard work of so many good people. We thank all who worked to ensure that the most sacred time of our Church Year was possible. To the many who contributed to the Easter flowers; your monetary contributions helped provide a beautiful environment for our magnificent church building – thank you. We thank our dedicated music ministers who faithfully provided us such beautiful music for the Sacred Triduum.

We thank too, Mike Keating whose endless energy for insuring the Church was so clean and the grounds so beautiful not to mention the countless ways he serves the parish in many other ways – thanks! To Diana Dugan for her endless energy and constant smile and her hard work to get things done so methodically and easily and for pitching in at whatever needs to be done and whenever it needs to be done. To our loyal Altar Servers, Lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, and Coordinators who set up and cleared away after each of the ceremonies this Triduum, to the Counters and Ushers, thanks for serving each of the ceremonies with reverence. Finally, to Father's Tim and Tom for faithfully witnessing to us their care, love, joy and authentic service and for being with us throughout the entire Holy Triduum. You choose to be with us, and we are beyond grateful for your service.

To our many visitors from other parishes or other faith traditions we are so glad you are with us. Please know you are ALWAYS welcome here at St. Stephen's.

But above all of this, we give all gratitude and honor to the one who truly deserves our thanks and praise, Almighty God! God is the great giver of all that is beautiful and joyful and so we thank Him for the gift of His Son, and the many blessings received during Holy Week and the Easter Season! St. Ignatius of Loyola reminds us all: *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam* - All for the greater glory of God!