

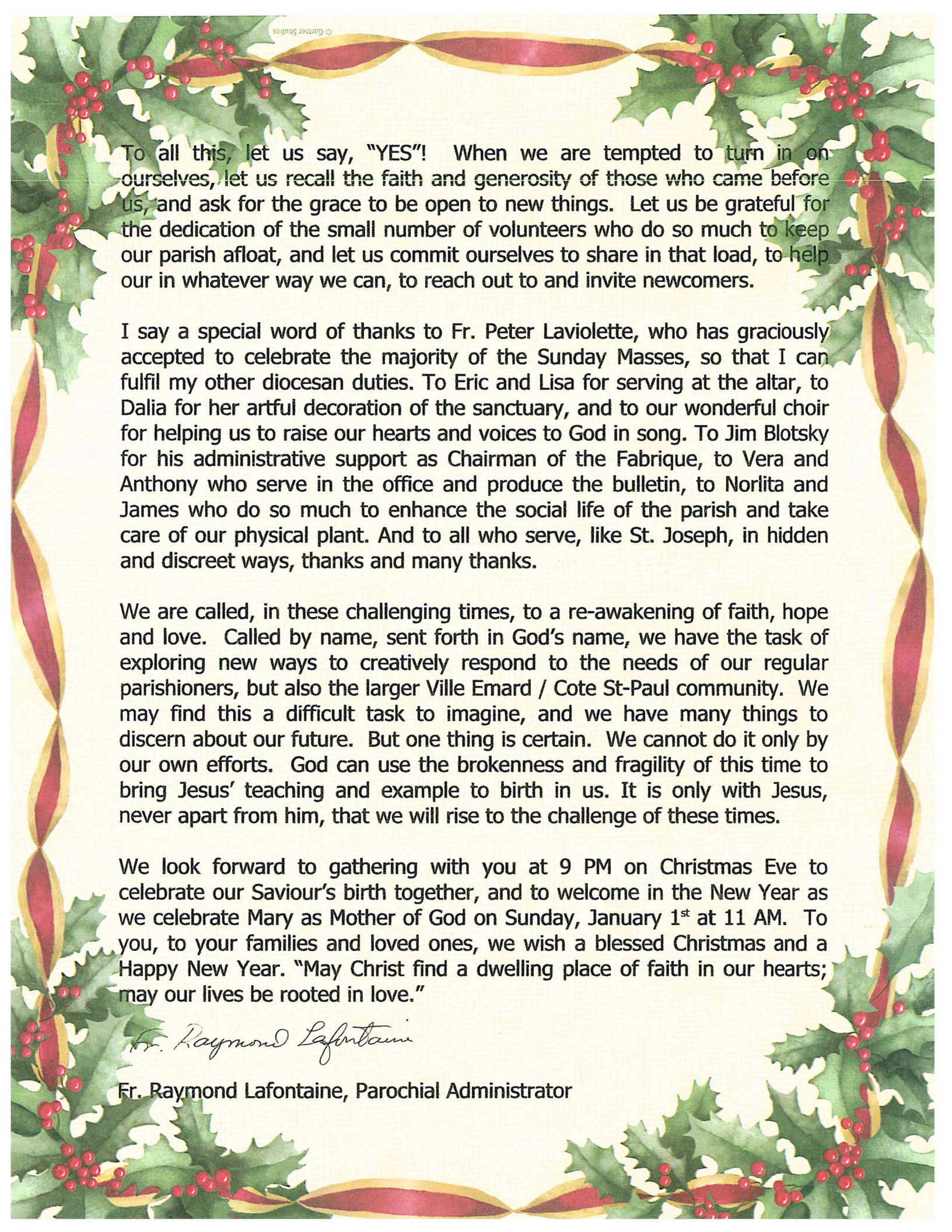
Dear Friends of Holy Cross Parish:

In my homily for the 4th Sunday of Advent this year, I chose to focus on an unsung hero of the Christmas story: St. Joseph. The Scriptures don't say very much about him, but in Matthew 1:19, we receive a key detail about Joseph, which helps us appreciate the special role God would entrust to him in Jesus' birth and upbringing. Joseph is a "righteous man": what the Jews call a "Tzaddik". His entire life was dedicated to searching out God's will and putting it into practice – even when it meant making hard choices.

Joseph made those choices, accepted his responsibilities, as a good husband and father, as a man of integrity. And in so doing, he, just like Mary, becomes a model of faith for all of us. Overcoming whatever doubts and fears he may have had, he trusted that this family, this life with Mary and Jesus, with all its twists and turns and adventures, was where he would meet God. Throughout, he continued to pay attention, to listen to that still, small voice within. Just as we are called to do.

"With a father's heart: that is how Joseph loved Jesus". With these words, Pope Francis inaugurated a special year dedicated to St Joseph in 2021. As Patron of the Universal Church, he outlined seven qualities of St. Joseph to motivate us as we too seek to grow in integrity and openness to God's plan: a beloved son and a model father, Joseph was tender and loving, obedient to God's word, welcoming, courageous, hardworking, humble, and self-giving." All of these qualities, Pope Francis stresses, can inspire us on our journey of faith, no matter what our particular vocation.

What can we learn from St. Joseph as we prepare to enter 2023, as the parish community of Holy Cross? To trust in God's will, to carefully discern God's voice and respond to it generously, to give generously of our time, talent and treasure for the building up of the community? To be welcoming of our Catholic neighbours in Ville Emard, as we discern our future together and see how we can better share our resources with one another, and together respond to the invitation to bear witness to Christ in these challenging times? To be open to the Holy Spirit, to dream new dreams, trusting in his power to bring what seems like death back to life?



To all this, let us say, "YES"! When we are tempted to turn in on ourselves, let us recall the faith and generosity of those who came before us, and ask for the grace to be open to new things. Let us be grateful for the dedication of the small number of volunteers who do so much to keep our parish afloat, and let us commit ourselves to share in that load, to help our in whatever way we can, to reach out to and invite newcomers.

I say a special word of thanks to Fr. Peter Laviolette, who has graciously accepted to celebrate the majority of the Sunday Masses, so that I can fulfil my other diocesan duties. To Eric and Lisa for serving at the altar, to Dalia for her artful decoration of the sanctuary, and to our wonderful choir for helping us to raise our hearts and voices to God in song. To Jim Blotsky for his administrative support as Chairman of the Fabrique, to Vera and Anthony who serve in the office and produce the bulletin, to Norlita and James who do so much to enhance the social life of the parish and take care of our physical plant. And to all who serve, like St. Joseph, in hidden and discreet ways, thanks and many thanks.

We are called, in these challenging times, to a re-awakening of faith, hope and love. Called by name, sent forth in God's name, we have the task of exploring new ways to creatively respond to the needs of our regular parishioners, but also the larger Ville Emard / Cote St-Paul community. We may find this a difficult task to imagine, and we have many things to discern about our future. But one thing is certain. We cannot do it only by our own efforts. God can use the brokenness and fragility of this time to bring Jesus' teaching and example to birth in us. It is only with Jesus, never apart from him, that we will rise to the challenge of these times.

We look forward to gathering with you at 9 PM on Christmas Eve to celebrate our Saviour's birth together, and to welcome in the New Year as we celebrate Mary as Mother of God on Sunday, January 1st at 11 AM. To you, to your families and loved ones, we wish a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year. "May Christ find a dwelling place of faith in our hearts; may our lives be rooted in love."

Fr. Raymond Lafontaine

Fr. Raymond Lafontaine, Parochial Administrator