



Diocese of Buffalo-Pittsburgh Polish National Catholic Church

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The PNCC Solemnity of Brotherly Love,
September 12, 2021

Dear Fr. Adam, Members, Friends and Guests of
Divine Mercy Parish,

It is with a great sense of thanksgiving and pride that I convey these words to you on your “first official Sunday” as a parish. This is only the first step of a journey, an idea, a hope that came to me when a young priest met with me almost two years ago. He outlined the details of what he had been experiencing in his life and ministry, and wondered if there would be a place for him in the PNCC. As a shepherd of God and a spiritual father to my diocesan parishes, the laity but *especially* to my shepherds, how could I say “no?” You know most of the other details – but if you don’t just ask Fr. Adam and he will tell you or read that which he has shared via social media.

This Sunday’s readings for the solemnity speak of two themes: the first is whether God is written in our hearts or whether He is a passing fancy to us. The second is: how do we (or in fact) do we oftentimes put our faith into action. First John asks us this question: If we don’t love a brother or sister whom we can see, how can we love our God, whom we cannot see? Finally, Luke in his Gospel relates the story of the “Good Samaritan.” I’m sure You know that story well. Our denomination can relate very well to the accusation made of the Samaritan: of being an “outsider, the man not keeping the law, the schismatic.” I will be in Lilly, PA this weekend to attend a parish anniversary on Saturday and Confirmation on Sunday. Like Divine Mercy, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel is a PNCC parish that sprang up from the ashes of a forced parish merger. My predecessor, the late Bp Thaddeus Peplowski, was sympathetic to their cause and called a meeting with those interested at which time the parish was organized. What he saw was this: hurting people who had been neglected, mistreated and told to simply “obey” the hierarchy that had made the decision for them to close. He did not proselytize anyone. He simply gathered the hurting and maligned sheep and cared for them as a true shepherd would. Much as with Fr. Francis Hodur in 1897, many of the same reasons continue to exist today. Fr. Adam and you, the laity, are a manifestation of these conditions that exist to this day inside and outside of the church. The parish in Lilly did not have it easy by any means. It is a very small town where word travels fast and pressures from family, friends and customers can elicit great power and vengeance. Some fell away, but the strong remained and formed a parish of which they can be proud.

The lawyer in today’s Gospel asks Jesus how he may justify himself. He asks him “what is written in the law. How do you read it?” Jesus understood that he “knew” the law.

What was required, what was mandated, what he was obligated to fulfill. What Jesus wanted to know was whether or not the words were in his heart and in his daily living. Thus the parable.

I ask you to remain steadfast in your faith and strong in your resolve. Do not succumb to taunts and threats, edicts and condemnation of yourselves, your pastor or our denomination. As Scripture says: do not repay evil for evil. If someone slaps you on one cheek, give them the other. Easy words to read; hard words to put into practice. By doing so, you will draw closer to Christ. Scripture also instructs us to "live a life according to the calling you have received."

My hope and prayer for you this day is that Divine Mercy Polish National Catholic Church will be a beacon of hope and light to the Las Vegas community. It is not the faith and charism of Fr. Adam that will add numbers to your parish family. No, it is the entire faith community, working together, breathing together, witnessing together and praising God with one voice and spirit that will attract others to you. If you are the authentic presence of Christ in your life, your work and in your community, people will notice. Ultimately we do nothing other than obey the call of Jesus to discipleship. It is Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit that will sustain and uplift you through all circumstances.

As with our denomination, the parish will survive and prosper if "it is of God." Next year, we will celebrate the 125th anniversary of our denomination. I'm sure that many detractors, way back in 1897 said, "it will never last" and they began a process to try to eliminate and dismantle us. This only further strengthened our resolve and our mettle.

I close with the words of St. Paul to the Philippians (1:6): I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus." Keep these words close by your side through the months ahead and let no man or institution ever deter you from this precious gift that God has given you: the gift of faith and salvation in Christ Jesus through His Holy Catholic Church. God will protect you. God will sustain you.

I long for the day that I can be with you to dedicate and consecrate your new parish to Almighty God. I pray that it will be soon! With my sincerest love, prayers and blessings upon each and every member, guest and especially upon Fr. Adam as he takes up this ministry, I remain,

Faithful Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John E. Mack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Bp John E. Mack – Diocesan Bishop
Buffalo-Pittsburgh Diocese
Polish National Catholic Church