

## FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



On January 6<sup>th</sup>, Cardinal Joseph Tobin was installed as our Archbishop of Newark. He gave a wonderful homily, excerpts of which I would like to share with you here:

“At a dinner party, recently, I was asked what is the greatest challenge the Church faces today. I thought a moment and replied: **the chasm between faith and life**. My questioner looked at me quizzically and remarked that she didn’t expect that answer. I imagine that she was ready for any one of the so-called “hot-

button” issues that dominate the discourse, both inside and outside the Church. As noisy and divisive as those questions might be, they don’t worry me as a growing trend that seems to isolate us, convincing us to neatly compartmentalize our life, subtly seducing us to go to Mass on Sunday, and for the rest of the week, do whatever we think we need to do to get by.

During this Christmas Season, God makes every effort to convince us that faith has everything to do with life – **all of life**. The proclamation of the birth of Emmanuel announces *God-with-us*. We do well to listen to that proclamation again and again; to hear over and over again that God is present in the midst of God’s people. This certainty, which we renew each year, is the source of our joy and hope. We just heard in the reading from the First Letter of John:

***And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever possesses the Son has life; whoever does not possess the Son of God does not have life.***

The gist of the proclamation of Emmanuel is that eternal life is given in Christ and nowhere else. More important, to possess the Son is not acceptance of a doctrine a moral code, but of a person who lives now and is the source of life – and not just on Sunday morning!”

### Jesus lives in the Church

“Jesus Christ lives today in His body, the Church, which is neither an elite club nor static container of truth. The Church is a set of interlocking and dynamic relationships among people and with the Triune God. The Church is the place where believers speak and listen to each other, and it is the community of faith that speaks with and listens to the world. The Church senses a responsibility for the world, not simply as yet another institutional presence or a benevolent NGO, but as a movement of salt, light and leaven for the world's transformation. For this reason, our kindness must be known to all.

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## FROM THE PASTOR CONTINUED

### An appointment to Newark

Through the decision of Pope Francis, the Church has called me to serve the Archdiocese of Newark. It is a daunting proposition, not because of the size, rich history or wonderful diversity of this portion of the Vineyard. Rather, the appointment reminds me that stakes are incredibly high, for if we permit the chasm between faith and life to continue to expand, we risk losing Christ, reducing him simply to an interesting idea or a comforting, nostalgic memory. And, if we lose Christ, then the world has lost the salt, light and leaven that could have transformed it. If we lose Christ, how will anyone find eternal life that is not simply an empty wish that can be dismissed as “pie-in-the-sky,” but the abundant, joyful life that God intends for us even now?

Standing before you in the presence of Emmanuel to whom I must render an account for the service I assume today, I am comforted by the words Paul wrote to his beloved friends in Philippi:

*Rejoice in the Lord always, I say it again, rejoice! ... Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.*

...Let's think a moment about the author and addressees of that letter, lest we dismiss it as pure Pollyanna. ...Paul uses the words, “joy” and “rejoice” more times than in any other of his letters. The whole book is shot through with gratitude and confidence.

...So, with the confident belief that my assignment to this Archdiocese is part of the saving plan of God, I can say to my beloved brothers and sisters of this Church: Rejoice in the Lord! Rejoice, because God is with us. Rejoice, because we will grow in unity and humility and, in the process, discover joy and peace in our life together. Rejoice, because our kindness will be known to all: to the searching young and the forgotten elderly, to the stranger and the voiceless, to the powerful and the cynical.

I thank God for summoning me to the Archdiocese of Newark. I am grateful to all of you for your warm welcome”.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Sean". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.