

# A letter from Our Cathedral Rector



Dear Parishioners,

Two weekends ago, I had the great opportunity to accompany our high schoolers on the Kairos retreat in Flagstaff. It was a wonderful chance for me to not only get to know the young people better, but also to witness what happens in the hearts and souls of young people when we lead them to a deeper encounter with Jesus Christ.

The retreatants had a variety of motivations for being there. Some chose to be there and were actively seeking an encounter with the Lord. Others were ambivalent about being there—they could take it or leave it. Still others were there because their parents “made them come”, as some of them admitted. No matter their motivation, it was amazing to see the Lord penetrate even the most resistant hearts. And, while I cannot go into much detail about the retreat itself, I do want to share an experience of mine that made me quite proud of these young people. But first, a side note...

A growing number of Catholics prefer the Extraordinary Form of the Mass (the “Latin Mass”) to the Ordinary Form of the Mass (the Mass in vernacular languages celebrated since Vatican II). The uniformity and strict rubrics of the Extraordinary Form all but eliminates the kinds of “improvisation” which has too often crept into so many post-Vatican II Masses, and made them more about the priest or the people than about Jesus. The real issue, however, is the *demeanor and preparedness of the faithful*, not in the superiority of one form to another, since both are valid rites for celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

My first Mass with the retreatants was a teaching Mass on Saturday. In addition to explaining the main elements of the Sacred Liturgy, I informed them that at the Sunday Mass the next day, I would be celebrating the Mass *ad orientum* (the priest and the people all facing Christ in the Tabernacle) at the church’s stunning high altar. In addition, I placed a kneeler at the foot of the altar for Holy Communion and *invited* the kids to receive on the tongue while kneeling.

To my delight, nearly all of the retreatants and team members received Communion at the kneeler. But what blew my mind was the focus and reverence they displayed, and their openness to entering into this intimate relationship with Jesus Christ in a way that was new to most of them and, I imagine, a bit scary. I can honestly say that I have never experienced a more reverent Mass with high school students than that particular Sunday Mass. Because it takes a bit longer for each person to kneel, receive the Eucharist, get up and then return to their seat, it was a *naturally slower paced process*. Not only that, but since this way of receiving was new for many of the youth, **they** were naturally more focused and attentive. I would have welcomed any of the people who prefer the Extraordinary Form Mass to witness what our young people are capable of with just a little extra guidance, and a lot of confidence in them.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank Jen Pitera, who directs our youth ministry here. She has a special place in her heart for our young people and she works very hard all year, *but especially in preparing retreats*, to bring them closer to Christ. Thank you, Jen!

I’m looking forward to the next Kairos retreat and, God willing, will be able to share this great spiritual experience with the next group of retreatants.

Parents of these kids...you have much to be proud of and grateful for. And so do we as a parish!

God’s blessings, my prayers...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. John Lankeit". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Very Rev. Fr. John Lankeit  
Rector  
Ss. Simon & Jude Cathedral