

# welcome HOME



ROBIN LIGUORI

As I parked my car and was walking toward the front entrance of St. Lawrence O'Toole Church on the morning of Sunday, June 14th, I felt an excitement that I hadn't felt in a long time. It had been three long months since my fellow parishioners and I had been able to come

together to celebrate the Mass inside the church. Above the front entrance hung a Welcome Home banner and the new Crucifix was breathtaking, but it was what was waiting inside that mattered the most. I knew it was going to be different inside and it was. As I was greeted by ushers and led to my pew, I looked around and was taking each change in. Pews were blocked with blue tape for social distancing, everyone was wearing masks, no missalettes or Holy Water. Ok, I get it. We're still in a pandemic and these changes are implemented to keep everyone safe, but what didn't change was that feeling that I was in the House of the Lord in the presence of Jesus.

Watching the Mass from home each week was a blessing. I knew I wasn't alone, as many others were also live streaming at the same time. It was comforting knowing we were all still celebrating the Mass together as a community. What got to me each week though, was saying the Spiritual Communion. I could not get through it without breaking down in tears. The Prayer of Spiritual Communion is very

beautiful, but I longed for the physical presence of the Eucharist and now here I was able to receive Jesus once again. Three months is a long time to be without food for my soul and I was starving! I got the feeling everyone else was too. It truly was very emotional for me because it made me realize that I took for granted that I could receive communion anytime I wanted and boy was I wrong. As a Eucharistic Minister, I even got to distribute communion at this Mass, and that always makes me feel so blessed. The Mass was beautiful and I know Fr. Gill was glad to have us all back so he wasn't looking at empty pews anymore.

I pray to the Holy Spirit that something like this never happens again, where our freedom to go to Mass is taken away. I think we all have a new appreciation and gratitude for the privilege of returning to normal, even if it's a "new normal." Thank you Father for welcoming us all back home!

