



Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
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FROM THE DESK OF FATHER JONATHAN

April 29, 2018

Last week I spoke at most of the masses about the security breach we experienced last week in the church when the reliquary under the altar was forcibly removed, stolen, and sold on the streets. We were able to recover the reliquary (not the relic) from a person who apparently purchased it from the thief without knowing that it belonged to the church.

This situation has spawned a more urgent look at how we can protect our church. During the masses I shared three options: 1) close the church during the day when masses are not taking place. 2) hire full-time security 3) invite parishioners to keep watch in prayer at the back of the church. The overwhelming recommendation from you this week has been to try the third option of volunteers. This is my preference as well. It would be a pity to close the church during much of the day because our church is a refuge of prayer for many. And it would be very expensive to hire a full-time security guard.

Perhaps God allowed this unfortunate situation to occur so that we might start this new ministry in which parishioners would keep watch in prayer throughout the day. These prayer volunteers would not be security guards. They would simply agree to pray in the church, for one hour, from the last pew. If they notice anything out of the ordinary, they would call a staff member to come and resolve it. They are keeping watch with the Lord while, at the same time, keeping watch over our church. We can call them "Sentinels" and we would have some form of prayer shawl for them to wear that identifies them as sentinels.

Let's give this a try for one month. It will only work if many of us decide to make a sacrifice of our time and sign-up for a time slot, between 7:30am and 6:30pm. After all the masses this weekend, there will be a sign-up sheet. Ideally, we will have several people sign up for the same hour, and every hour. For organizational purposes, we will need a captain for each day of the week, who will work to keep that day's hours occupied by our sentinels. We will also need a general coordinator. If you think you can be a daily captain or the general coordinator of the ministry, please let us know at the sign-up table. I have asked Fr. Israel to be the point-person for this new ministry.

If, after a month, we see that we do not have enough volunteers, we will need to revisit the other options. Let's continue to pray for our entire neighborhood, especially for those suffering addiction and mental health.

God bless, Fr. Jonathan