



St. Mary's
Catholic Church

A Note from Fr. John

Dear Brothers & Sisters,

In an effort to keep you all "in the loop" I thought it might be time for another update on parish life.

As you can see the work on the stained glass windows of both the main church and the small church are well under way. My thanks go out to Stan Klein, our resident historian and architect, who has been instrumental in getting this process going. We are taking our time with the windows to ensure they are restored to perfection. As you can imagine, this is tedious work. Thank you for your incredible patience in dealing with machinery and scaffolding around the churches these past weeks.

Our beautiful little mission church, Our Lady of Guadalupe, has entered into the finance and debt review stage with the Archdiocese. We are hopeful that this project will be approved before the end of the year so that work can begin as quickly as possible to our historic mission church. Please join me in thanking Gilbert Gonzalez, who has truly been a blessing in the planning stages for this, long overdue, renovation.

Many of you were able to visit the St. Mary's Cemetery for the All Souls Day Mass. The mausoleum project is about 3/4 of the way done. If you haven't had a chance to visit the cemetery lately, you are welcome to view the progress of our expansion, and spend some time at the gravesites of the loved ones from our parish who have passed on.

As we enter in to these final weeks before the Christmas holiday I wanted to give you all a couple of things to think about while making your plans to attend Mass here at St. Mary's. This year, given the restrictions on attendance at each Mass, the Archbishop has given us permission to add another Mass after 2pm (normally we are not allowed to have a vigil Mass before the hour of 4pm). Hence, we have added a 3pm Christmas Eve Mass. This Mass will be a perfect fit for the seniors of our community who wish to come to Mass and return home before sunset.

The 6pm family Mass this year will start with the Christmas Pageant reenacting the Nativity. Mass will begin immediately after the pageant. This Mass will be livestreamed for those at home.

For the second year, we will have Lessons and Carols at 11pm, followed by midnight Mass. Please join us for a wonderful opportunity to hear various readings from the old and new testament outlining and leading up to the birth of Christ, intermixed with music.

Christmas Day, we will once again offer two opportunities to attend Mass: 8am and 10am.

All of the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses will open for registration on Monday, Dec. 21st at 10am. As you can imagine, these Masses are likely to fill very quickly. We are opening up half of the Holy Family Center for limited overflow seating at all Christmas Masses. The seating in the church will be on a first come, first seated, basis. After the church is filled to capacity, those attending will be seated in the Holy Family Center where we have screens available to project Mass.

We are making every effort possible to ensure that our parishioners can attend "live" Mass and it is for this reason that we are waiting to open up registrations to the general public. Very large groups of visitors are hard to seat and, though we always welcome visitors to our church, we want to especially serve our parishioners during this season. Please keep this in mind when registering your family, and guests, this year. The restrictions of Covid 19 have put us all in a frustrating position and we appreciate your patience as we do our best to serve you all. Our parishioners are our first priority.

Finally, as we enter the colder months of the year where sickness abounds, I want to take the time to thank you all for your vigilance in wearing masks, sanitizing your hands when entering the church, and distancing yourselves in the pews. It is out of obedience to the Archbishop and his guidelines for attending Mass in our Archdiocese that we must remain prudent in maintaining these standards. The last thing we want to happen is for an outbreak to occur. After 10 months of these restrictions it can be tempting to be lax in our diligence, but we've seen parishes within our Deanery close very recently as a result of positive Covid 19 tests. With so many visitors to Fredericksburg and our parish on the weekends, we have to be extra cautious. The church has been closed to visitors during the week with your health and safety in mind. For this reason we must work to keep our standards consistent for the weekend Masses. I truly appreciate your patience and forgiveness when, from time to time, we all need a friendly reminder about the regulations that have been put in place by Archbishop Gustavo.

Please continue to pray for the health of all our St. Mary's parishioners and especially the students and staff of St. Mary's School. Mr. Mein has done an amazing job of keeping our students and staff safe and healthy, and there was proof of this when the Fredericksburg ISD was forced to go to online instruction for well over 2 weeks, while St. Mary's was able to continue to offer in person classes to our students. Even under quarantine conditions, as have happened from time to time, our teachers are excelling at maintaining our standards for teaching students at home.

Continue to pray for each other during this time, and stay healthy friends!

In Christ Jesus,

Fr. John
