

Dear St. Mary's Family,

I hope and pray that each of you and your families are well and that you are beginning to get into a rhythm with this new way of life. In all honesty, I am struggling somewhat without my daily routine and without seeing each of you. You all bring me such joy and happiness, and yes, that means you too Jeff Kunz.

We here in Gillespie County are certainly blessed that the COVID-19 virus hasn't entered into our community and families in full force. May we continue to hunker down and stay home and stay healthy. Let's continue to pray for all the other cities within our great country and those areas around the world that are less fortunate than we are here in Fredericksburg.

I am very pleased to see how well our live streaming Masses are being received. We are seeing some amazing statistics coming from Facebook regarding our live streaming efforts. Just take a look at the numbers below:

- As of Today, we have 598 new Facebook page followers.
- 7,436 people have viewed our page from March 11<sup>th</sup> to April 7<sup>th</sup>.
- 10,038 comments/likes/shares have been posted from March 11<sup>th</sup>, to April 7<sup>th</sup>.
- 3,440 people viewed our Palm Sunday live streamed Mass.

Those are some pretty remarkable statistics my friends. I cannot say enough how proud I am of you for making the incredible efforts and sacrifices to stay connected. These first few weeks of live streaming the Mass has afforded the parish staff the time to work out the bugs and to get acclimated to their new roles as camera operators, directors, etc. I think they have done a spectacular job. Therefore, as of Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, St. Mary's will be extending an invitation to a small number of parishioners to join us for Mass each day. Keeping within the gathering limit of ten, there will be approximately six available slots each day for Mass. If you would like to attend Mass, please contact either Rumalda or Dena at the office and sign up for a particular day. If that Mass is already full, they will provide you with the next available Mass date. When you arrive at the church, please enter through the side door by the piano and take a seat in the pews being mindful of the six-foot rule. At the conclusion of the live streamed Mass, Holy Communion will be distributed to all those present. So, please pray about this. It would be great to see your smiling faces. On another note, this year our Holy Week liturgies will be quite different than what you have experienced in years past. The Archdiocese has provided each pastor with detailed instructions as to how each of the liturgies is to be modified during Holy Week. Amy, our incredible Director of Music, will provide a worship aid for each of

you to use at home for the Holy Week liturgies. It would be my hope and desire that you use these aids to follow along with us.

Our Holy Week live streaming events are as follows:

- Holy Thursday - 7:00 PM
- Good Friday:
  - o 3:00 PM Stations of the Cross (Prerecorded video with Deacon Pat which can be found on the parish website)
  - o 7:00 PM The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord.
- Saturday - 8:30 PM Easter Vigil Mass of the Resurrection
- Easter Sunday - 10:00 AM

I received an email from our Parish Council President, Mr. Lyndon Immel yesterday, which I would like to share with each of you. The original author is unknown, but I believe this reflection will assist us in putting things into perspective. The email is as follows:

*For weeks I have heard people saying "I just can't wait for things to be back to normal." I remember even saying that a few times myself. But, as I've thought about our current situation, I have realized how much I don't want things to go back to the way they were. Here are a few of my thoughts...*

*1. I pray that the next time a friend grabs me and pulls me in for a hug, I actually take the time to appreciate the gift of their embrace.*

*2. I pray that when school resumes and you are dropping your kids off, you take the time to thank the staff for the amazing gift that they give to your family.*

*3. I pray that the next time I'm sitting in a crowded restaurant I take the time to look around at the smiling faces, loud voices and thank God for the gift of community.*

*4. I pray that the next time I'm standing in church listening to the voices of praise and taking communion that I take a moment to thank God for the gift of congregation.*

*5. I pray that the next time I see a person or situation that needs prayer, I hope I pray as passionately and fervently as I have these past few weeks.*

*6. I pray that when I am at the grocery store that I take a moment to thank God that He provides us with the necessities of life and the amazing people who work so hard to keep us supplied.*

*7. I pray that I never again take for granted the ability to hop in the car and visit a friend, go to the mall, take my kids to a movie, etc.*

*So, truth is, I don't want things to return to the way they once were. I pray that we take the lessons and challenges of the past few weeks and create a new normal. My goal is to pray more, love harder, and truly appreciate the daily abundance of blessings that were so easily overlooked just a mere few weeks ago. If someone tells you they love you, take it to heart.*

In closing, as an individual, as a family and as a parish community, we must continue to do our best to “flatten the curve” of the COVID-19 virus and follow CDC as well as local and state elected officials’ guidelines. We must continue to be diligent in our battle against this horrific pandemic. During this time of sheltering in place and social distancing, please do your best to remain home and limit your time away from the house. I know that these challenging times bring concern into our daily lives that was not there only a month ago.

My final reflection for you all today came to me while pushing a shopping cart around HEB last week. Might I suggest, as you gather around your family table, give thanks for the food that nourishes you and the men and women who work in the farms and fields that grow and produce it, and those at HEB who stock it and sell it as well. Know that our country and its people will get through this difficult time. Please stay healthy and safe and appreciate life at a little slower pace than we have become accustomed to living.

May we continue to hold one another in thought and prayer.

Peace & love,

Fr. John