

ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH

March 24, 2020

My dear sisters and brothers,

I am writing this letter to you in the midst of our state and nation's struggle to respond to the corona virus. As you know this virus also affects the Church. As I look out on Sundays and see no cars – no people – I am forcefully reminded that no matter how beautiful church buildings may be, without people, they mean nothing. People are the Church and you are missed!

Archbishop Vigneron has instructed all parishes to observe all measures to address the spread of COVID-19. He has suspended any public Masses – weekday and Sunday. This includes Holy Week and Easter Day (April 12).

Even though Catholics are unable at this time to attend Mass please remember that Sunday is the "Lord's Day" and should be kept by all of us as such. Consider viewing Mass in some sort of broadcast (online, radio, or TV). Go to <https://www.aod.org/livemasses> for information and make a "Spiritual Communion" each Sunday you are unable to participate in Mass. There are ways to be connected with each other in a spiritual way. Go to <https://www.aod.org> and <https://spiritualcloseness.org> for directions.

The coronavirus has put our parish – indeed all faith communities – in a very precarious financial situation. All churches are dependent on the financial contributions of the faithful. If there are no Sunday Masses, there is no offertory collection.

I want to thank parishioners who are using online giving and those mailing in their envelopes. St. Thomas More Parish has 14 employees and I am concerned for all of them. The full-time employees depend on the parish for their livelihood. The Archdiocese of Detroit has announced that it will maintain existing payroll levels for its employees through April 6. We will do the same here at St. Thomas More. After that time, hours worked, benefits received, etc., will all have to be re-evaluated.

If you can help your parish by maintaining or increasing financial support at this time it would be greatly appreciated. Please consider electronic giving by accessing the St. Thomas More website (<https://stthomasmoretroy.org/>) and choosing the icon for donations.

A very good question to ask now is "Where do we go from here?" The answer:

We go to Jesus. It is Jesus who tells us that He is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). So, my pastoral advice to you is that you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. As Christians we need to adhere to that time-honored question: "What would Jesus do?" What would He want us to do during these extraordinary times? We know the answer. Jesus wants us to trust Him, trust God's love, and reach out to others. Even though we have to practice "social distancing" and "shelter in place" we need now, more than ever, to double up on acts of kindness for others. How about that elderly neighbor down the street? Does she need groceries or a home cooked meal? When you go to the grocery store call her and ask what she needs, and put the bag on the front porch. Put the meal there too. Offer what you can do and do so joyfully and generously. As the song says: "They will know you are Christians by your love." Now is the time to prove it.

Please also know I am with each of you. I am your Pastor and I embrace each of you with God's love. Together we are God's children and Our Father will never abandon us.

Finally, I want to turn your attention to a "Saint of our times", Mother Theresa (now St. Theresa of Calcutta). One day a reporter who had been following Mother Theresa around for a week asked her the question: "Mother, what is your definition of a saint?" She responded: "a saint is a person who does all the ordinary things of life with extraordinary love!"

I love that definition of a saint and I hope you do too. Why? Because it reminds us that all of us can become saints, if we want to. So, in these dark, uncertain and frightening days, **go be a saint!** Go prove Mother Theresa right! And when we look back on these days, and by God's grace we will, we will thank God that all will know we are Christians by our love.

Let us pray for one another, our nation, and our world.

Your brother in the Lord Jesus,

Monsignor Thomas Rice
Pastor

P.S. "A prayer during the Coronavirus pandemic" follows.

A prayer for the sick especially those suffering from the coronavirus

Loving God, you sent your son Jesus Christ to heal the sick.
We ask you to come to our aid in the midst of the coronavirus crisis
that we too may experience your healing love.
We ask you to heal those who are sick.
Calm those who are living in fear.
Be with those who have died and comfort their families.
Inspire health professionals to aid them in their healing work.
Guide national leaders to lead and make decisions with wisdom.
Help us to always be aware of your presence as we place our trust in you.
We ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Prayer for an end to coronavirus crisis

Loving God, we come before you in our time of need.
We lay before you our concerns and fears over the spread of the coronavirus.
We know that you are mightier than all our fears
and that the name of Jesus is the name above all other names.
We ask, in the name of Jesus, that you stop the spread of the coronavirus.
In your mercy, heal those who are sick and lead those who have died into your heavenly kingdom.
We ask this in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.