

Saint Raphael and Sacred Heart Parishes

March 24, 2020

My Dear Members of Saint Raphael and Sacred Heart Parishes,

Father John, Father Steve, Deacon John and Susan, Deacon Bill and April join me and our entire pastoral staff in sending you our heartfelt prayers and thoughts on this special day of fasting and prayer as Bishop Zubik leads our diocese in begging God to have mercy on the Church and the world and come to our aid to turn around this global crisis caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19). We believe God never delights in the destruction of the living. God did not create this pandemic. God is good and wants only to intervene and bring about the miracle that will restore people to health again and lead us in ways that are righteous, just and charitable.

These days have been unprecedented, affecting our lives in ways we could never have imagined. Understandably the concerns in our community are high. Unfortunately, we cannot mail a hard copy of this letter as we originally planned because of the stay-at-home order.

Therefore, I am using the best means we currently have to reach out to you; that is by way of the electronic bulletin, our website and the email blasts to all the people on our Parish Database System. Please help us connect to many of our parishioners that do not have email. We want to expand our capability to somehow reach every member of our parish as soon as we possibly can. Connecting to our parish family is our primary task right now as the coronavirus continues to cause people to isolate and sometimes feel afraid.

I am pleased to share with you a great outpouring of love from parishioners that want to help us and neighbors beyond our parish membership who are at risk. I met with a couple of them and they have designed ways for us to support you or your loved ones by providing grocery shopping/delivery, picking up pharmacy items or even just a supportive phone call. Whatever your needs are, please contact Jack Shaw, Parish Director of Outreach at 412-508-5383 or email Jack Shaw at jack@bestpghparish.org and let us know how we can help.

Some parishioners have offered to volunteer their time or resources within the public health guidelines and we sincerely appreciate their kindness and concern. If you are in a position to volunteer, please contact us at the number or email above. Although any volunteer help is welcome, please know that your health and that of your loved ones is of utmost importance to us. If you are unable to physically volunteer, please know that your prayers are equally important and deeply appreciated.

Because we rely upon the generosity of our parishioners to operate, now more than ever, we are counting on you. Just for electricity in our grouping, we need approximately \$10,000 per month. Please, please mail your envelopes to your parish office. Or now may be a great time for you to consider enrolling in the Faith Direct on-line giving program. This program not only saves us in the printing and mailing of our offertory envelopes, but it provides a steady-stream of income for our parishes – especially in these unusual times.

Also, please remember that our Parish Share Program continues despite the fact that there are no masses. At year's end, our grouping will still owe the Diocese approximately \$200,000 whether we are able to collect it or not. And, as you know, if we are blessed enough to collect MORE than the \$200,000, we are able to keep that money for our operating costs and without "tax" by the Diocese for future PSP assessments.

We hope that you who are able will visit our website at **www.bestpghparish.org** and view the videos our clergy team and pastoral staff members are beginning to produce. We hope you find these messages inspirational and heartwarming. We are a community of believers and one parish family. With the support and love of one another we can emerge from the fear that we have felt in the past few weeks. As we journey even closer to Passiontide, please be assured of our continued prayers for you and your loved ones. In a very special way you are all remembered each morning as the priests concelebrate a Mass together. Be kind, be safe and remember that "with God, all things are possible," (Matthew 19:26).

Father Joe