



The Reading Catholic Community

St. Agnes and St. Athanasius Parishes

Bringing hope and healing through encounters with the Living Christ

May 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we thankfully now see our state and towns open slowly and safely, I write today with great hope for the wonderful things God has in store for us. I also write with some pressing needs to ensure we remain a vibrant and growing collaborative, transitioning to meet our parishes' needs in unforeseen, trying times.

On the hopeful side, we will open our doors and pews for Pentecost Sunday, May 30/31 with 2 Masses at each parish: Saturday, 4PM and 10AM at St. Athanasius; 9AM and 11AM at St. Agnes (with the 11AM Mass also live-streamed).

As Pentecost commemorates the Holy Spirit's descent upon the Apostles in Jerusalem, and represents the birth of the early church, it is only fitting that Pentecost is our opening weekend. Our plan enables us to have "live" Masses under State and physical limits. Jesus told his disciples that, "I will not leave you orphans!" He is with us today through the Holy Spirit enlivening our Church to go out into the whole world and preach the Good News of God's love and mercy. We will continue his Mission no matter the situation.

For our challenges, the lack of "in person" Mass attendance and collections during the last 3 months of COVID-19 has greatly highlighted our pressing needs. Despite cutting permanent staff at both parishes, our fiscal gaps are growing; we therefore must address them to remain two fiscally viable parishes.

Under state and archdiocese guidelines we will no longer be able to "pass the basket" as it comes in contact with too many people. Our Sunday basket collection is our primary source of income. To offset this, our first step is to update our current rates of electronic giving. Most of us buy goods and pay bills electronically daily, weekly and monthly; some use electronic transfers exclusively. While not for everyone individually, studies show this works - as it better enables parishioners, parish budget consistency and planning. I know of parishes where this works well, and I also know of parishes that struggle when they don't adopt this and other measures.

Please click this link to aid you in switching over to Online Giving: <https://readingcatholic.org/giving-1>

Online Giving offers many benefits for the viability of our parishes: better planning and monthly predictability for us all. Some are in better positions than others to give or increase their weekly contributions - please do so if able - while some are understandably not. Whatever you do, please join us in moving our giving electronically.

Yours in Faith,

Father Steve Rock

P.S. Please continue to pray for a quick end to this pandemic and especially for first responders, medical personnel and those who have lost loved ones. Mary help of Christians, Pray for us.