

St. Mary's Church
160 North Spring Street
Bluffton, Ohio 45817

April 6, 2020

My Dear Sisters and Brothers:

It is my prayer and sincere hope that you and your loved ones are safe and healthy during these difficult times of this Coronavirus Pandemic.

In chapter 8 of St. Matthew's Gospel we hear the story of the apostle's fear and panic when they were confronted by an unexpected storm while riding in a boat with Jesus. However, once they called upon Jesus for help their prayers were answered and the storm subsided. In these troubling days when the storm of the Coronavirus/COVID-19 causes us fear and panic we are asked to place ourselves in the care of our God. We must always remember that even though we are being asked to distance ourselves from each other we are still connected deeply in faith, hope and love with our God and our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Whenever we gather together as a community of faith at the celebration of the Holy Mass we encounter the presence of God and one another in the words of the Gospel and the reception of the Holy Eucharist. Although presently we are unable to gather together physically to express our love and gratitude for our Lord and each other, we still can rejoice in the strength and faith of our parish which is far greater than the challenges that we are presently experiencing.

I would encourage you to join our daily and Sunday celebration of the Eucharist which is being streamed from St. Gerard's Parish in Lima, Ohio. Daily Mass is celebrated at 8:30 am and weekend Masses are celebrated on Saturday at 5pm and Sundays at 8:30 am, 11am, and 1:30 pm (Spanish mass). If you go to St. Gerard's Parish website you will find the link for the streaming. I also encourage you to go to **our** parish website and parish Facebook page (St. Mary's Catholic Church – Bluffton, Ohio) to keep in touch with me and our wonderful parishioners.

With the suspension of our regular offertory collection, I am asking and encouraging (circumstances permitting) that you consider continuing your

financial support of our parish either electronically or by mailing in your church offering to the parish office. I do understand that some of you are suffering financially from loss of work and that you are dealing with the difficulties of trying to pay outstanding bills, but if at all possible, could you please help me with your support in covering the costs associated with managing our parish. Thank you!

I want to express my gratitude for all you do for me and our parish community. As a strong community of faith, hope and love **we will** emerge from this Coronavirus storm. Like the apostles on the Sea of Galilee, if we place our trust and hope in God we will be saved from the harm of this pandemic and we will **be** victorious as a community of faith for **we are #StMarysStrong!**”

Be assured of my prayers for you and your loved ones. God bless you and may Our Mother of Perpetual Help watch over and protect you.

Love and blessings,

Fr. John McLoughlin, C.Ss.R.

P.S. I want to wish you and your loved ones a most Blessed and Happy Easter. May the Risen Jesus empower us to rise from the Tomb of this Coronavirus and go forth as an Alleluia People. Amen.