



Faith, Hope & Courage

Dear Olga Heineman,

What a year this has been! Due to the coronavirus pandemic, we've faced illness, anxiety and even loss of life. We have endured job loss and economic hardship. And we have, tragically, had to do all this while being physically separated from one another and from our parish communities. I have greatly missed celebrating liturgies with the faithful of our diocese and am overjoyed that we have been able to resume public celebration of the Mass in all our parishes.

We are approaching the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, which for Catholics, represents both an ending and a new beginning. As the world continues to face the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, we as parish communities face the process of reopening after the shutdowns, while also looking at an uncertain future. There is much that is still unknown, and we must chart a path forward with *Faith, Hope & Courage*.

The reality is that the emptiness of our churches in recent months has also meant a reduction in giving. Some parishes are feeling the effects more than others. Many have given generously via electronic giving or by sending gifts directly to the parish, and for this I am very grateful. Our parishes rely on the offertory collection to fulfill the Church's mission of spreading the Gospel and caring for those in need. Each parish also has the reality, like many organizations, of paying bills and salaries, maintaining infrastructure, and running essential programs. **Without the generosity of our people, it would be impossible for us to fulfill our mission, which is needed now more than ever.**

Your pastor and parish leadership will be sharing information about how your parish weathered this storm in the next couple of weeks. While I realize this is a time of great economic hardship, I humbly ask you to receive the information with an open heart and mind. Then, please prayerfully consider the following to assist your parish in planning for ministry, outreach and operations:

- A commitment to pray for your parish.
- A one-time gift to help recover lost offertory from the shutdowns.
- A renewal of your offertory commitment for the coming year, or a formal commitment if you have not made one before.

All commitments empower us to continue our mission and serve our neighbor. If you are unable to give financially, know that I am grateful for your gift of presence at Our Lady of Grace Parish and your prayers. Without each and every one of you, Our Lady of Grace Parish would have no reason to exist.

If, for whatever reason, you have been separated from the Church for a time, know that your parish's doors are always wide open to you, awaiting your return. The Lord, in His overwhelming mercy and love, never tires of welcoming us home to Him.

Please know that you and your families remain in my daily prayers, and I humbly ask to be remembered in your prayers as well.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend Gregory Parkes
Bishop of St. Petersburg

