

Dear Parishioners,

I hope and pray that you are all doing well and staying healthy! These continue to be very strange and uncertain times, and I want you to know that your parish family is here for you. A couple of items of note for this week.

First, I wish to apologize for the repeated technical difficulties in regard to our attempt at live-streaming the Sunday Mass from St. Mary's at 8:30am. I do believe that those issues have truly been resolved now, and after having had conducted a practice run, believe that we should be all set. So, this Sunday, August 9, we will resume the weekly live-stream of Sunday morning Mass at 8:30am from St. Mary's Church. You will be able to find the link to watch on your respective parish website. Thank you for your patience!

Second, as you know, our parishes have been supplying little holy water bottles in the holy water fonts at Church for you to take with you, in lieu of having water sitting in the font that everyone dips their fingers in. Please remember that the idea is that you take a holy water bottle for you and your family and bring it with you to Church. While we as a parish staff love the fact that the holy water bottles are disappearing as fast as we can put them out, it is getting to be expensive for the parish to continue buying new bottles. So, please keep one bottle for yourself and your family, and when it is empty, you can certainly refill it from the stainless steel holy water tank in the back of Church. I have directed the parish staff not to buy any further bottles, so once the ones that we have are gone, they are gone. Just a reminder here that any clean bottle can be used to store holy water- again, you can simply bring your own bottle to Church and fill it from the steel drum tank in the back.

Third, I know that there are questions swirling about what religious education/faith formation for the youth of our parishes will look like this fall. I am actively discussing this with the parish staff. We will be having a meeting at the Diocesan level next week, and I would suspect that protocols for conducting faith formation will be forthcoming after that. Please stay tuned- I will let you know as soon as I do. However, please also be assured that our parish staff is already making multiple sets of plans for various scenarios. Thank you to our parish staff!

Fourth, I would like to draw everyone's attention to a new opportunity for all parishioners to grow in the knowledge of your faith. Holy Spirit and St. Mary's will be working in conjunction in order to provide a weekly faith formation opportunity, which we are calling "The Basics of Catholicism." This will be a weekly event (Tuesday evenings from 7:00pm – 8:00pm) which will begin on Tuesday, September 15. Each Tuesday evening, myself and other presenters will discuss what it is that we believe as Catholics, and especially how to respond to those who may question the Catholic faith or what the Catholic Church teaches. This is a great opportunity for you to learn more about your own faith and to learn some skills in apologetics so as to be able to explain why the faith teaches what it does. We will have options available for people to be able to both attend these sessions in person or to attend virtually through an online provider from the comfort of your home. If you are interested in being a part of this new faith formation opportunity, I ask you to please call your parish office and let them know that you wish to sign up. There are a lot of beautiful teachings of our Catholic faith- let's make sure that we know how to explain and express them!

Finally, just a word of encouragement to all of you. I know that there is a lot of uncertainty, unrest, fear and anxiety in our country and our world right now. The pandemic and its tolls in the areas of health, public safety and the economy are unnerving. The civil unrest, violence and destruction going on in several areas of our nation are disturbing. And, it just seems that each day, new challenges face us as a people. My encouragement to you is this: remember, God is still in control. And, as I said many months ago in my homily for the feast of Christ the King: God does His best work when everything seems lost. Have courage, and have faith, my dear friends. God is with you, and He loves you passionately!

Please remember too that your parish Church is meant to be your spiritual home- a place of sanctuary and relief from the craziness that can happen in our daily lives. Even if you may not yet be comfortable with the idea of attending Mass due to health concerns, consider the possibility of stopping in at the Church sometime during the week for personal prayer. The quiet, peaceful refuge that is our parish Church is meant to be your safe harbor in the storm. Jesus waits for you in the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle, and He longs for you to visit Him and spend time with Him. Even if it is just for ten or fifteen minutes, a regular visit to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament at Church will bring great spiritual benefit!

May God bless you and keep you all close to His Sacred Heart. Please know that you are in my prayers!

Fr. Steve Laflamme
Pastor