

March 29, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I have just returned to the office after celebrating my Sunday Mass online with many of you. Yes, it is different but even with this difference I know that many of you are joining me in prayer for the healing of our world and for the needs of all who are affected by the COVID-19 Virus.

With that said, it is with a sad heart that I share with you the news that the virus has intimately touched our community of faith and taken several of our brothers and sisters. Please pray for those families and for all who grieve and for all who worry about loved ones far off and who cannot be with them at this time.

By coincidence, today (Sunday) is the ***Solemnity of the Dedication of our Parish Church of St. Francis on March 29, 1969.*** Tomorrow we will celebrate this great day, as I didn't want it to go unnoticed. While the focus of this feast is our Church building and the day when it was first blessed and dedicated for worship 51 years ago, the real focus is the community of faith that gathers here to worship and be spiritually nourished- ***the real focus is US- all of us-*** our vast, diverse community of people from all over the world, representing many cultures and traditions, many generations at different stages in their journey of faith, all with different gifts and talents and ***yet united as one people and family in Christ.***



As I stood in the empty Church today after others had left, I couldn't help but notice the innumerable bricks that makes up our beautiful church building. Some are visible- others not so! In many ways each brick represents the families of our community, those who are consistently present and even those who are not so- but who remain part of

our community. At times like this, the need to belong to a community of faith is as important as the need to believe in hope and to trust in God.

Many people are speaking of "***social distancing***" but let me add just another idea- "***spiritual distancing***" and with it once again offer the invitation to all who, for what ever reason, have distanced themselves from the Lord and from our community to reconnect with us and once again be part of our family. Spiritual distancing can be just as painful and destructive as any virus but unlike COVID-19 where we don't yet have a vaccine, we do have a remedy for spiritual pain and isolation- not a vaccine but a person- Christ Jesus and the community that gathers

in his name! So if that is you- know that our door is open (metaphorically at the moment) and that we are willing to help you to enter through it.

With that in mind, can I remind you that we continue to live stream our liturgies so that all of us can remain connected and we look forward to the great day, whenever it will be, when we can gather together again in person- when our Church once again swells to the sound of our worship and fellowship. Please see our Parish Website <https://www.stfrancisa2.com/> for details of our Holy Week and Easter Liturgies and other online programs.

Until the next time, we continue to keep all of you in our prayers and thoughts at this time. May the Lord continue to bless and protect our community and all who belong to us and strengthen the bonds of love and fellowship that unite us in Christ!

Yours in Christ

Fr. James