

***St. Francis of Assisi Parish
Ann Arbor***

June 12, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I just finished reading an interview with Dr. Andrew Wang in the June edition of Columbia Magazine. Dr. Wang is a professor at Yale University, specializing in immunobiology with research in the area of the Covid-19 Virus. The interview was varied and informative- something that we do not always get through the media or online. As a medical practitioner and a practicing Catholic, Dr. Wang seeks to combine his faith and his scientific expertise in dealing with the Virus. But what I was deeply grateful for was his clear declaration that he believed Mass and the sacramental life of the Church to an *essential service* and not just optional extra in life.

I know that most of you will agree with Dr. Wang and are looking forward to the day when all our parish ministries and services are fully restored. As Catholics, we know that going to Sunday Mass and receiving the sacraments are essential to our lives- for here we truly connect with Christ and through Christ with one another. We need each other on the journey of life; indeed, we are stronger and better together in Christ, especially in times of challenge. If we have learned anything through this crisis, it is the importance of faith and community- of being there for one another!

Happily, this past weekend (June 6/7) marked the first stage of re-opening our parish and so far I am delighted to say everything went pretty well. Under our current regulations, we are permitting up to 150 registered parishioners at our weekend Masses and 50 at our weekday Masses.

But this is just one of the many signs that we are on the way back. In addition, we are once again celebrating weddings and funerals, and offering dates for baptisms and other sacraments. As noted before, we will move cautiously and slowly on all of these matters and will try to be as flexible as possible with your requests.

So with this email I want to remind you of a few things:

- Masses at SFA are open to registered parishioners only- Sign up through the online sign-up genius is still required. I know this is not always convenient, but for the moment it allows us to control numbers for the safety of all attending. <https://www.stfrancisa2.com/>
- We continue to live stream three of our Masses and at the Sunday 10:30am Mass, folks are also invited to attend and sit in their cars in the parking lot. Holy Communion will then be distributed after Mass.

- The use of masks, hand sanitizer and social distancing is for everyone's benefit. *After every mass, we take the opportunity to sanitize and cleanse the pews and all the doors and the area of the sanctuary.*
- As of now, our 12:30pm Sunday Mass is the least attended of our English Masses and may be a good choice for many of our seniors, and those with health issues who wish to attend Sunday Mass. Alternately, they may wish to attend a weekday Mass.

NEW ASSOCIATE PASTOR.

As many of you know Fr. Tony has been reassigned to a parish in Flint. We wish him well with his new assignment and thank him for his ministry among us. He will leave us after morning Mass on June 17. Our new associate pastor, Fr. John Vinton, will arrive on June 24.

FUNERALS and WEDDINGS at SFA.

In the past few weeks, we have celebrated several funerals here at SFA. The permitted number in attendance at funerals is 50 and subject to the same rules as above- masks, hand sanitizer and social distancing. The same is true for weddings. For further details, please contact me through the Parish Office 734-769-2550

FIRST COMMUNIONS and CONFIRMATIONS at SFA.

For the celebration of First Communion and Confirmations, please contact the Religious Education Office, as they have the calendar and will confirm available dates. Many of you have already signed up and we look forward to seeing you. stfreled@stfrancisa2.org or 734-476-5640

BAPTISMS at SFA.

Responsibility for the scheduling and preparation of families for baptism traditionally falls to the associate pastor. Given the current circumstances with the Covid-19 Virus and the imminent arrival of Fr. John, I have temporarily taken over this task. So, if you are seeking to have a child baptized, please contact me through the Parish Office 734-769-2550. Even though we are not able to offer the regular monthly preparation class, we still require you to do some preparation.

All parents and godparents are expected to sign into our online **FORMED** program through our parish website and watch the six required videos entitled ***“Reborn: you, your child and the Heart of Baptism.”*** This will help you greatly in your understanding of and preparation for your child's baptism.



RECONCILIATION at SFA.

Beginning June 24, we will return to a more regular schedule for Reconciliation. For the moment we will continue to hear confessions outdoors, in the area in front

of the PAC on Thursdays from 11am to 12:30pm and Saturdays from 11am to 12 noon. During the summer months one priest will be available to hear Confession.

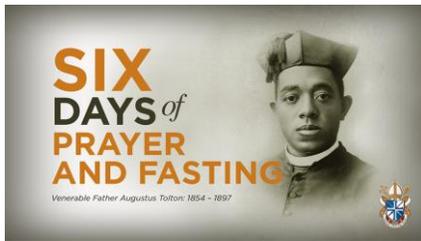
DIOCESAN SERVICES APPEAL

With the advent of the Covid-19 Virus, we had to defer our annual Diocesan Services Appeal. We believe that we are now able to resume this appeal. Envelopes and flyers outlining the work of the Diocese through DSA are still available in Church. Please help us reach our goal by contributing to this important appeal. Gifts can be made online at the diocesan website- please remember to designate St. Francis Parish <https://dioceseoflansing.org/DSA>

PARISH BULLETIN

We have begun again to publish our weekly parish bulletin. It will primarily be available online through the parish website with a limited number of hard copies in the Church for those who do not have access to a computer. In the past our bulletin has been noted for its size, as much as its content- our plan is to slim down the bulletin and to use the website and emails to better effect.

PRAYING for our NATION



The last few weeks have been very painful for our nation. In response to all the civil and racial unrest, our bishop has asked all of us to join in a weekly time of prayer and fasting for the healing of our nation, and an end to racism and discrimination. Details can be found on the Diocesan website:

<https://www.dioceseoflansing.org/news/bishop-boyea-declares-six-days-prayer-and-fasting-peace-justice-and-reconciliation>

Finally, thank you all who sent good wishes, prayers, and gifts for my 18th anniversary of priestly ordination. I am deeply touched by your love and prayerful support. As we begin the process of reopening our parish, I look forward to seeing you all very soon. In the meantime, you are in our thoughts and prayers- please stay safe!

Fr. James