

*St. Francis of Assisi Parish
Ann Arbor.*

August 11, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is hard to believe that we are almost through the summer season. The dreaded Covid Virus is still with us and our daily lives continue to be impacted by its presence and the many restrictions and precautions we have to follow. So, I thought it might be useful to bring you up to speed on how things are going at the parish and our plans for the next few months.

But before I get into the nitty-gritty of our plans, can I ask you to pray for a couple of special intentions? First, pray for the healing of our nation at this time of racial tension and struggle. I am sure that you also have been shocked by the continued rioting and destruction in many of our inner cities and the attacks on our emergency and police services. True justice and peace can never be built on violence and death- we need honest dialogue and respectful listening. Secondly, pray for all those working towards a vaccine for the virus- they certainly need God's wisdom and guidance at this time.

BISHOP'S DISPENSATION from SUNDAY MASS

As you know, attendance at Sunday Mass is a sacred obligation on the part of all faithful Catholics- never to be ignored without serious cause. With the advent of Covid, the Bishop initially dispensed this obligation until early September. He has now extended this dispensation to the end of the Church year on Nov 28.

However, I am often asked what this means for the spiritual life and why we have not simply shut down the Church. So let me explain!

For the term of the dispensation, the obligation is simply set aside. But please understand that the Church is not saying that Sunday Mass is no longer necessary or important. Indeed, one could say that the need to attend Mass and to receive Holy Communion is all the more essential in these challenging days. In the words of one of my more sympathetic correspondents, "*we need Jesus more today, if we are to get through this.*" How true that is!

SUNDAY and WEEKDAY MASSES at SFA

As of now we have five weekend Masses- three of which are live-streamed, in addition to all our weekday Masses. In light of the dispensation, we invite you consider what Mass might be best for you and your family- obviously the weekday Masses have a much smaller attendance and therefore are more suitable for seniors or those with health issues. For the moment, we still require that you sign in online for all Masses.

One of the reasons why we recently restored the Sunday 8:30 am Mass was to give you another option to attend in a safe and reverent manner. So far, attendance has been rather sparse but we expect that to change once students get back to school and religious education is up and running.

ST. FRANCIS PARISH SCHOOL

Speaking of school, I want to take a moment to thank our school principal, her staff and committees for their hard work in putting together the very detailed and proactive plan for the re-opening of our parish school. When most schools in the region have opted for virtual education, St. Francis School is offering a choice to our parents- virtual academy or in class instruction. The plan is detailed and includes many sensible precautions to ensure that students continue to receive the very best education in a safe and suitable manner. It has been well received and we look forward to having some of our students back on the campus very soon.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Plans to resume religious education early in August are also in place. If you have a child in grades PreK-8 not attending SFA school, please sign up at: <https://stfrancisa2.wufoo.com/forms/20202021-prek8th-religious-education/> In person (outdoor classes as weather permits) and virtual classes are available.

Please contact the Religious Ed Office for further details- stfreled@stfrancisa2.org or 734-476-5640.

CONFESSIONS at SFA

Confessions have resumed in the Church Gathering Space on Saturdays at 3:30pm. One priest is available and for the moment we ask all to enter and exist through the front doors only and to follow the instructions given in the bulletin. Please note that Confessions will end promptly at 4:30pm. We will review this over the next few weeks and see if other times need to be added to our schedule.

SPEED SAFETY at SFA

As an open parish campus with several entrances the issue of speed and safety comes up regularly. Once again we want to remind all to drive safely and slowly through the campus. We especially ask parents dropping off/picking up students to pay particular attention to this matter. Because our students will have more outdoor instruction, we have decided to close off the Winchell entrance and to use only Frieze Ave one. We also ask you to exercise caution when parking, especially during school and Religious Education hours.

HOLY COMMUNION to our SHUT-INS and HOSPITAL VISITS

When COVID hit, we temporarily discontinued the ministries of bringing Holy Communion to our seniors and shut-ins and hospital visits. Many restrictions continue to be in place that prevents us from visiting. However, if you wish to receive Holy Communion or a visit from a priest, please let us know by contacting the Parish Office at 734 769 2550.

As our Masses are limited to registered parishioners, we are beginning to see an increase in requests to take Holy Communion to family members. Unfortunately, some of these requests have come from people who are unknown to us. While we generally encourage this practice for those who cannot attend Mass due to age or ill health, it must always be done in a safe and reverent way and with the permission of the pastor. Holy Communion must be taken home in an approved container- a pyx. To ensure this, we have extra *pyxides* available together with a prayer sheet. Please see one of the priests to obtain one.

PLIGRIMAGE to GRASS LAKE

We will have a one day pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Joseph on September 1. It's a local shrine but will give us all a break from the monotony of the stay at home regulations. We will each drive separately and be home by the afternoon. Further details can be found in the bulletin and online. Everyone is welcome to join us, but please sign up so

that we can keep track of numbers and properly accommodate you. \$25/person includes take out lunch and the donation to the Shrine. Sign up at: <https://stfrancisa2.wufoo.com/forms/pilgrimage-shrine-of-saint-joseph-grasslake/>

SUNDAY GIVING and DIOCESAN SERVICES APPEAL

Thank you to all who continue to support our community with regular Sunday giving. Please be assured that we are taking all steps necessary to



be prudent with expenditures. But can I ask those who have not given recently to consider a gift to our community? The virus has meant a decline in our Sunday attendance and giving but not in expenses and ministry costs. You can give online

at: <https://giving.parishsoft.com/App/Giving/stfrancisannarbor/>

We also resumed our annual Diocesan Services Appeal. Envelopes and flyers, outlining the work of the Diocese through DSA are 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>

Finally, today, we celebrate the feast of St. Clare of Assisi, friend and collaborator of our parish patron, St. Francis. St. Clare is often depicted holding a monstrance, recalling her great devotion to the Mass and the Eucharist. So, let us ask St. Clare to continue to intercede for our parish and world at this time of great difficulty.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. James