

St. Francis of Assisi Parish Ann Arbor

October 9, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This beautiful autumn weather and the Fall colors must surely be a sign of God's constant care for us, even in the midst of this crazy Covid time. As I write this email, I am getting ready to travel to Mackinac Island for a delayed summer vacation. As I leave, please be assured that I will keep you all in my prayers and Masses while on the island. In the meantime, there are a few matters, which I would like to share with you all. It's a varied list so please bear with me!

SIGN IN for MASSES

Once again, may I remind you of the importance of signing in for weekend and holy day Masses and following all of our precautions? To sign in visit our website <https://www.stfrancisa2.com/> I know that this can be inconvenient but it is necessary and for the safety of all involved, especially those who are most vulnerable. As of now, we are permitting up to 150 per Mass based on the capacity of the Church. When you simply turn up without signing in we run the risk of exceeding this number. ***So please sign in!!!*** Remember also to use hand sanitizer and to wear your mask, unless you have a real medical reason not to do so, and even then can I ask you to consider if a weekday Mass might be more appropriate.

THE 2020 ELECTION- the CATHOLIC RESPONSE!

As we move into the election season, I am getting many requests for clarifications on Church teachings and for guidance in voting. Let me first remind you that I am not a US Citizen and while I enjoy the political game, I am not eligible to vote. ***As citizens that is your sacred prerogative and right.*** So, I challenge you all to get out and vote and to exercise that right and above all to vote right down the list and not simply for the top positions. In many ways, those lower elections can often have more impact on our community than the federal ones.

If you are looking for guidance, then check out the very helpful documents issued by the Michigan Catholic Conference of Bishops. The most recent one entitled, ***"The Issues, the Candidates, and the Your Vote 2020,"*** lays out some of the questions you might ask yourself when deciding on your vote. It emphasizes the importance of well formed conscience, which is different from a personal/political preference and highlights many of the key issues facing our nation at this time from the protection of all human life to healthcare and the care of the environment. It, and many other well researched documents based on our catholic faith, can be found at <https://www.micatholic.org/advocacy/2020-election/>

One other issue that it addresses is the importance of civility in our national affairs. Let's be honest over the past decade our national dialogue has grown coarse and uncivil. Issues that should be dealt with civility, compassion and

respectful clarity have descended into a shocking diatribe of disparaging abuse and attacks. For some, this is how they get their message across- but it is not the Christian way- our response even with those we fervently disagree with is always one of respect and civility. We, as Catholics, must lead the way on this!

OUR PARISH SCHOOL and RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Thankfully, both our Parish School and our Religious Education Program have been able to take full advantage of this good weather to provide outdoor instruction for our students. It certainly does add an extra experience for them and makes the campus seem so alive and busy. One of the joys I have experienced is chatting with the preschoolers who are camped on the west side of Church. I get to see them several times a week and they are such a noisy joyful lot!

Just a reminder, it is because of our students that we have closed off the entrance on Winchell- to cut down on the number of cars using it as a shortcut to Stadium. Please do not attempt to use this entrance.



OCTOBER at ST. FRANCIS

Our month in honor of St. Francis is off to a good start. On Oct 3, we celebrated an outdoor bilingual Mass and over 200 people attended. Our gratitude goes to the Spanish speaking part of our community who provided some lovely treats and wonderful hot chocolate afterwards. If you have still not been able to pick up our October Prayer Card in honor of Padre Pio- the healing saint- copies are still available in both English and Spanish in the Church. We chose Padre Pio for his strong reputation in healing- something our nation and world needs at this time.

ALL SAINTS and ALL SOULS

These great days of celebration and prayer are coming up very soon. This year, All Saints falls on a Sunday (Nov1) and All Souls the day after. All Souls and indeed the whole month of November are traditionally dedicated to praying for our beloved dead. This year our parish commemorations will be as follows:

- Mon, Nov 2- Mass at 9:15am
- Mon, Nov 2- ***Dia de Muertos*** Mass in Spanish at 7pm.
- Sat, Nov 7- Parish Commemoration of all who have been buried from SFA at our 5pm Vigil Mass. (*invitations have been sent out- please remember to return the orange postcard ASAP and to sign in online for mass attendance- only those names will be called out during Mass.*)

WALKING with the SAINTS- Nov 1

As we celebrate All Saints Day, we have got together with St. Thomas Parish to organize a walk beginning from St. Thomas and ending here at our parish with

Adoration/Benediction and veneration of Saint relics. This is a great family event- a good healthy walk, prayer and social distancing fellowship, but all are welcome to join in! Departures from St. Thomas every half hour until 5pm! For more information see: <https://www.stfrancisa2.com/walking-with-the-saints/>

ADVENT and CHRISTMAS at SFA

In these crazy times, I am working on an Advent/Christmas schedule that is flexible and allows the greatest number of people to attend Mass. My plan is to add extra Masses to our Advent/Christmas Eve/Day schedules. Once I have it finalized, I will be happy to share it with you- so please watch out for this- it will be published in the Bulletin and online and hopefully in my next email to you all. Advent has also two important Marian feast days that we plan to celebrate.

Solemnity of Immaculate Conception (Dec 8)

- Mon, Dec 7- Vigil Mass at 7pm
- Tues, Dec 8- Masses at 9:15am and 5pm
 - 7pm Mass in Spanish- location TBD (most likely in Ypsilanti)

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. (Dec 12)

- Sat, Dec 12- 5pm outdoor bilingual Mass. Our celebrations will begin at 4:30pm with a Mariachi band. *Please remember to dress warmly and to bring comfy chairs and rugs! This is an important feast day for our Mexican and Hispanic brothers and sister and one way we can show our solidarity and unity as a parish community.*

CONFESSIONS at SFA

During Advent, we will have extra times for Reconciliation. As of now we offer Confessions on Saturday afternoons from 3:30pm to 4:30pm- with one priest available. As the weather turns, we will reconsider this and work out a new plan. But please remember, that Reconciliation is the first and essential way to prepare to receive Holy Communion. If you are aware of grave or serious sin in your life, then please refrain from receiving Holy Communion and join us in making a Spiritual Communion.

Finally, once again can I thank all those who have continued to support our parish and its ministries? As your pastor and fellow parishioner, I am so grateful for all your gifts and most importantly your prayers. We are a strong, diverse, vibrant and very active community, because you make it so- your continued support is so essential to this. As is often said- “you only give to what you value” and I am so grateful that so many of you value all that we do here at your parish. So, stay safe and strong!

Fr. James