



Annunciation Parish

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November 22, 2020 – Our Lord, Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Annunciation Parish,

As Thanksgiving approaches, I am grateful for all of you. I am grateful for your continued living our faith in these very unusual and challenging times. I am grateful for your continued support of one another, and of our life together as a parish. And I trust that you are grateful for one another, as well.

Even as the Covid-19 Pandemic has disrupted our “normal” ways of being a parish, it does give us reason to be more thoughtful, deliberate, considerate, and kind. Crises come with opportunity; this crisis affords us the opportunity to be who the Lord Jesus calls us to be, more intentionally.

This being so, I invite you to be intentional...to be prayerful...to practice gratitude each and every day. Make every day a faith-filled and faithful response to the challenges, the disruptions, and the uncertainties, as well as to loved ones, the blessings, the experiences of the Lord’s goodness. In all things, give God thanks.

A frequent saying of mine - perhaps you’ve heard it in a homily or two – is that the work of holiness is for each one of us to continually create and prepare and allow the capacity within ourselves to receive the gifts God gives. If we do the work to be ready for God, God, whose promise is sure, will not disappoint.

And so, I invite you to consider some of the works, by which we ready ourselves:

Worship: It has been almost four months since we have resumed public worship. All participating in person have made every effort to observe our protocols for safe worship during the pandemic. I ask that we continue these responsible precautions in service to the common good, and to promote the health and safety of one another. The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days continues through the end of this calendar year. Any change in this Church discipline in 2021 will be shared with you.

Currently, Mass is offered at 5:00 p.m. Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. Sundays, and 9:00 a.m. on an announced weekday every week. Mass will be offered on Thanksgiving Day at 9:00 a.m. Beginning the First Week of Advent, weekday Masses will be offered Mondays through Thursdays, at 9:00 a.m. Tuesday, December 8th, the Holy Day celebrating the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, will include a 7:00 p.m. Mass, in addition to the 9:00 a.m. Mass. Our Christmas schedule of Masses will be 5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve, 12:00 a.m. Midnight Mass, and 10:00 a.m. on Christmas Day. Masses for New Years, the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God, will be at 5:00 p.m. New Year’s Eve and 10:00 a.m. on New Year’s Day.

These are the details. The purpose of worship isn’t to give God that which God lacks, but to create in us the place for God.

Prayer: It seems that one of the opportunities provided during this time of crisis is for us to cultivate the interior life. It has always been assumed that a Catholic Christian's life was characterized by personal prayer - private, domestic, devotional, reflective, contemplative – extending the Mass throughout the hours and day of every week. Early on in this pandemic we endeavored at Annunciation to guide and direct and provide suggestions for prayer. So as not to overwhelm, I simply encourage you to explore our parish website (www.annunciationbvmparish.org) and Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/annunciationbvmparish>). You will find a wealth of supports for your prayer life. One thing I would like to offer as we prepare to enter into Advent is to be united in a common prayer, *The Angelus*. Tradition prescribes it is prayed three times a day: morning, noon and evening. At the very least could we all pray The Angelus, wherever we are, at least at evening? Some of you live within the sound of our Church bells; most can set our devices to call us to prayer.

***Prayer is spending time with One who is important to us;
it's providing the space for God to dwell in us.***

Service: As people of faith, we are called, in the words of the Mass for Christ the King celebrated this past Sunday, to build a world of justice, love, and peace. Let's return to the basics, after a very challenging and confusing political season, and together be committed to *CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING*, which begins by knowing what this wonderful dimension of our faith is. Secondly continue your generous support of our parish St. Vincent de Paul Society. Third, check on someone who may be experiencing isolation doing this time of pandemic.

***Service is charity and mercy at work; it grows the heart.
An expanded heart is ready for God. And for our neighbor.***

Stewardship: Throughout this pandemic, so many of you, even if not able to join in person for Mass, have continued to make your financial offerings to the parish. Perhaps some are waiting until year-end to catch up. Hopefully we can all generously support our parish at Christmas. Contributions can be made as you enter or leave Church for Mass, they can be mailed to the parish office, they can be made online.

Recently we have set up a more user-friendly way to make your contributions online with WeShare, at annunciationbvmparish.weshareonline.org. With this platform you can contribute regularly to the Sunday collection, to the St. Vincent de Paul collection, special collections, and capital needs.

Recently we had \$9,000.00 of work done on the Church boiler, and hope to address \$25,000.00 of roof, gutter, and surface repair on the Rectory and Garage, and about \$1,000.00 of plaster repairs related to those roof and gutter issues. Capital funding needed at this time is \$35,000.00.

***The sharing of our financial resources to support the work of our parish
indicates a grateful spirit responding to the blessings we have received,
and that sharing expands our spirits to perceive even more blessings.***

Community: This I believe has been the greatest challenge, and threat, posed by the pandemic. In the age of social-distancing and sanitized and masked interactions, we are at risk of losing our physical connection with one another. We're at even greater risk of accepting the disconnect as somehow the new "normal." But Christ comes to gather what has been scattered, to make of the many one body, one spirit, in Him. Christian faith is relational, not transactional. It is life lived together.

Down the road, when this pandemic subsides, and we begin to resume being the social creatures God has created us to be, we will need patience, forbearance, and an openness to relearning forgotten ways of doing things as Church. We will need a sincere commitment to stability, to care about these people in this place at this time; to care about our life together as a parish community. And to care about those who come after us. I ask for your commitment to our parish.

***It is in the work of community that each one of us realizes who we are;
the work of community enlarges mind and heart and spirit.
And we begin to appreciate our being created in the image and likeness
of the Eternal One, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a Community of persons.***

Finally, and briefly for now, there are other matters to share with you, regarding our parish school and enrollment and future viability, as well as the initial stages of regional discernment and planning with St. Bernard Parish and Mother of Christ Mission. In the days and weeks ahead, and into the New Year, communications will address these realities, and require your understanding and support.

With sincere gratitude for you and for our parish, I am sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Todd O. Grogan
Pastor

P.S. In the mail version of this communication I am including a Liturgical Calendar for the Year of Grace 2021, beginning the First Sunday of Advent. For many years now we have provided this to parishioners. I encourage you to place it somewhere prominently in your home, to order our days in the Lord's peace, and to be ever mindful of our journey through time, to eternal joys.

You will also find a Capital Funds Envelope to help offset recent and pending expenses.