



Annunciation Parish

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May 14, 2020

The Feast of St. Matthias, Apostle

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Annunciation Parish,

I write to you on this Feast of St. Matthias, Apostle. He's an interesting person, instructive for us as we respond to ever-changing circumstances. St. Matthias, we know, was chosen to fill a vacancy caused by the Betrayal and desertion of Judas. The remaining Eleven knew that twelve were the tribes of Israel, twelve were selected by the Lord to go forth and proclaim His Gospel. But there had been a traumatic disruption for the early Church, and the early Church had to respond. How to remain faithful in the midst of crisis? The more things change, the more they stay the same.

For us at Annunciation, with the "Apostolic Arch" in the Mural over the Altar, the Twelve Apostles are depicted. But St. Matthias is not among them. Rather, the artist chose to include St. Paul, never one of the Twelve, but Apostolic in rank nonetheless. So St. Matthias didn't make the cut. Week after week, we don't see him. Most of our faithful acts, even in time of crisis, go unrecorded, unnoticed. But our faithful acts, like St. Matthias, are necessary for it all to hold together. We know this is what it means to be the Church, one, holy, catholic, AND apostolic.

The pandemic crisis continues. We are called to continue in faithfulness. Allow me to call your attention to several matters:

- **Pentecost approaches** – This year Pentecost is Sunday, May 31st. It may be the first Sunday, since March 15th, that public Mass has been celebrated. It will not be a return to normal, as the pandemic emergency continues; it won't "feel" like normal. More on this below. What I would ask is that all of us make every effort to pray **The Novena to the Holy Spirit**, enclosed in this mailing, every day from Friday, May 22nd through Saturday, May 30th.
- **Financial Stewardship** – First, making public what so often is conducted behind the scenes, and offer on behalf of all your fellow parishioners a sincere "Thank You." The Sunday collection throughout April and for the first two weeks of May has not only held steady, but has been strong. I encourage you to continue in this generous spirit of giving, by which we all cooperate with the Lord by extending the blessings we have received to others. Consider **Electronic Giving**; if that seems acceptable to you let me know of your interest. **Mail in your contributions**, simplifying by sending a month at a time, rather than weekly. **Remember our St. Vincent de Paul Society**, and consider any **School Support** (over \$6,500.00 was received in April) you might make.

- **Faith and Common Sense** – an enclosed brochure that some of you may have picked up if coming to Church these past weeks to make a Visit to the Blessed Sacrament. I wish to make it available to all of you. Although written, and provided free of charge by the publisher, at the beginning of the pandemic, it still offers in straightforward language, a Catholic’s response to these challenging times. Fundamentally, that response is common sense, reasonable caution and precautions, and service offered for the safety, health and well-being of all persons.
- **The Resumption of Public Worship** – As mentioned above, the return to public Mass will not be an immediate return to the “normal” that was our experience in early March. First, the **Dispensation from the Obligation to attend Sunday Mass** continues until further notice. This is a recognition that the COVID-19 Pandemic is still real, and that any social gathering poses real risks to all of us. What the resumption of Mass will look like at Annunciation is, at the time of this mailing, unknown. A **COVID-19 Response Team**, consisting of several parishioners (doctors, nurses, administration professionals, and project analysts) is presently working with me to determine all reasonable possibilities, the necessary logistics, and a communication plan to safely resume Mass. **PLEASE BE ALERT FOR ANY AND ALL FORTHCOMING COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PARISH**, to assist you in knowing what to do, as we move forward together.
- **Enhancing our social media presence** – one area of concern of mine, as well as of the above-mentioned response team, is our ability to reach parishioners and those beyond our parish by means of live-streaming of liturgies, webinars, formational offerings, and even regular “messages from the pastor.” We just haven’t had the technological infrastructure to make such outreach possible. I have engaged an Information Technology Professional to design three options for consideration that will enable us to “go live” and stay connected. During the next week, I’ll meet with him on-site to assess the real needs of the Church, and to make some determination of the best option for us. At present, his most expensive option is approximately \$14,000.00. **Please contact me if you are interested in helping us realize our enhanced social media presence.**

Again, this is a time of crisis. The origin of that word is the Greek, *krisis*. The ancient Greeks who gave us the language of the New Testament, were thoughtful and responsive people. A *krisis* for them was not a fatalistic sense that it was all falling apart and nothing could be done about it and nothing good would be left. Rather, *krisis* was an opportunity: something has happened, something is happening, and it pulls back the veil, if you will, and shows us what’s really there, who we really are, what we are really capable of doing.

A crisis is a time of opportunity for people of faith. It doesn’t tell us what to do next; it asks us to be thoughtful and responsive, to be faithful and hope-filled, to be loving, peaceful and just. The Cross was crisis for Jesus; His Resurrection the fruit of His response to that crisis. Pentecost, Christ Jesus’s Spirit at work in us, is our participation in His Resurrection, even now, and in the days to come.

May the Risen Lord continue to bless you with every blessing His Spirit bestows!

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Fr. Grogan