

March 19, 2020

Dear St. Joseph Parishioners,

Greetings in Christ. I write this to you on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, the patron of our parish. Happy feast day!

As most of you know, there have been many changes to our everyday life over the past few days. As such, it has taken me until now to write this letter that I've been wanting to write since earlier this week!

Please know that I am keeping all of you and your families in special prayer during these uncertain times. These rapidly changing circumstances may lead some to experience feelings of panic, fear, worry, and doubt. But as we read in the Book of Isaiah, "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (41:10). Therefore, what we have now is an opportunity to intentionally place our trust in Him, even as we make prudent accommodations in our daily routines. Does anyone else have cracks in their fingers yet from washing their hands so much?!

In case you do not know, Bishop Gainer, out of great concern for the health of the faithful and in union with the Bishops of Pennsylvania, has temporarily suspended all daily and weekend Masses in the Diocese of Harrisburg. Additionally, he has suspended all public liturgies and devotions, and has asked that all churches and chapels be closed. Furthermore, parish events are to be cancelled for the time being.

As your pastor, my greatest concern is for your spiritual care. Times like these make that more challenging, but I'd like to offer you the following:

- If you have not already done so, and have access to the Internet, please follow our parish Facebook page (@SJDanville). This will be our primary means going forward of communicating with you, our parishioners. You will find listed there, and on the diocesan website, many materials to promote prayer and spiritual growth as well.
- Also, I point you to our newly-created YouTube channel ("St. Joseph Church, Danville, PA"). Sunday Mass (and hopefully, some weekday Masses) that I will celebrate in our chapel will be posted there by 10 am each day (if the Mass will be posted that day). Additionally, you will find other resources (such as our weekly RCIA lessons, so you can continue your ongoing faith formation).
- The weekly bulletin and my Sunday homilies can be found on our parish website, www.stjosephdanville.org (click on "Bulletins/Homilies" at the top of the page).
- The parish offices are closed to visits; however, simply call during regular business hours (8 am to 4 pm), and your call will be forwarded to our parish secretary, Melissa, and she will help you as needed. You may also call me directly at (570) 275-2512, EXT. 2.
- Please continue to keep the Lord's Day holy. Time for extra prayer, Scripture reading, viewing Mass, and time together as a family are essential.
- Reconciliation – if you have an urgent need to go to Confession, please call me directly at the parish office. I will give you instructions as to how we will arrange for Confession.

I know the suspension of Mass, and the other changes, are difficult for many of you. Please understand these requests are for your safety, the safety of your fellow parishioners, the safety of those at-risk family members living at home with our parishioners, the safety of our parish staff, and yes, the safety of your pastor. In no way are we removing God. On the contrary, we are greatly increasing our online presence and are providing a range of resources for your continued spiritual growth. As your pastor, please be assured of my continued prayers for you, your families, and all those affected by this virus.

Although we cannot be together in person during Masses, I am keeping you in special prayer as I offer Mass. My hope is that this time of deprivation of receiving the Holy Eucharist, will help all Catholics grow in greater fervor for the Gift we have. To that end, I would like to point you to the following “Act of Spiritual Communion”, which you can pray daily, especially when participating in Mass online or on TV.

This act was composed by Saint Alphonsus de Liguori: “My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.”

Finally, amid the concerns that surround this current global situation, and in light of Bishop Gainer suspending all public Masses, like many individuals, our parish expenses will continue during this difficult time. Many of you may also feel additional financial strain during the weeks ahead. And although I feel awkward about saying this, I would humbly like to ask for your financial support, now more than ever. Please consider registering for online giving to make your contributions to St. Joseph Parish. Simply go to our parish website and click on “Online Giving” at the top of the page. Or consider mailing a check to the parish offices. Your gift enables our parish to continue our mission, which is the same now as it always has been – to spread the Kingdom of God. Yes, we are doing it in new and different ways. But, may the Holy Spirit provide us an abundance of grace as we continue the proclamation of the Gospel for the salvation of souls. Thank you so very much for your continued support!

In closing, while there are many things we cannot control, one thing we can, with effort, is our response. I truly believe that this is an opportunity for great spiritual, emotional, and even social growth. May the Lord provide for all of your needs, and may almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. St. Joseph, pray for us.

In Christ’s love,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fr. Marco". The signature is written in a cursive style with a stylized initial "F" and "M".