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JUNE 8, 2020

**Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. ~Matthew 10:28**

**Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ~1 Peter 2:5**

Dear faithful parishioner:

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> all-parish mailing I am sending you during the COVID-19 shutdown. Together we are slowly climbing into a healthier place. I acknowledge that there are a wide range of opinions, *and* a wide range of reactions that people have with everything going on. Please take a respectful and compassionate approach to those who see it differently than you. Thank you for your patience and support as we take a safe and slow approach to restarting public Masses. Also, we especially need to keep our country in prayer at this time as we witness the demon of anger rear its ugly head. Jesus is the answer. As your pastor, I want to connect you to Jesus in any way possible and bring about healing.

**What is going on with the Masses?** We are currently completing our own version of phase 1 for restarting public Masses. Please note that, by design, our own phases may look different than other parishes in different regions of the diocese.

- Phase 1: We offered Holy Communion *after* weekend Masses for those who prayed at home and who came to the church during a set time. This phase expires on June 13. Weekday Masses are available right now to smaller numbers of healthy people. Everything we do is safe, and we have instituted screening and cleaning processes that work.
- Phase 2: This phase starts on Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup>. During this phase, we are able to accommodate crowds at weekend Masses of up to 25% of our church's capacity. For St. Mary, this is around 85 people. For Holy Trinity, this is around 60 people. We will restart all 5 weekend Masses at their normal times on June 13<sup>th</sup>. In order to bring-in a healthy group of people and to light a holy fire in the parish, we will use this phase to welcome our First Communion families. First Communion families are already signing up for Masses on the weekends of June 13/14, 20/27, and 27/28. If they do not use all the allotted seats, then the general public should fill the remaining seats. The sign-up is available on our websites through SignUpGenius. You can also call the parish office. People can still come for Communion immediately after the 4:00PM or 9:00AM Masses. Safe practices remain in place during this phase. Also, weekday Mass attendance should increase.
- Phase 3: This phase begins on July 4<sup>th</sup>. This phase is not yet defined. If everything is going good in our community with COVID-19, it is possible that we fill our church at 50%, 75%, or even more in phase 3. It will all depend on local conditions. Phase 3 could even begin earlier. Reading the parish bulletin is essential for updates! As you know, the way that we pray together will look different for a quite a while regardless (i.e. no Sign of Peace, social distancing).

**Notes:** All Masses will be livestreamed via Facebook until the Bishop lifts the dispensation and all people are obligated to come back to Mass. You do not need a Facebook account to watch the Masses. Simply use the links on our parish website. There are regionally televised Masses available as well.

**Will the parish school open on time in the fall?** It is our intention to open school on time. *Nobody* can make any guarantees. Every school, public and private, is in the exact same situation and will be following the same guidelines. However, our advantage is that we can uniquely offer a small, safe, and clean program on our own terms. We are proactively preparing for the ways that we will keep our students and their families safe. I am proud of the innovative ways that we kept our students learning over the past few months. Our teachers are to be highly commended.

**How is the parish doing financially?** The parish has been able to stay on track for two reasons. The first reason is that our parishioners made wonderful sacrifices and kept giving even during the shutdown. One year ago, we took the first steps towards instituting tithing (a percentage-based method of giving). People responded generously and faith-giving has increased. Neither parish took out any loans during the COVID-19 crisis! The second reason for this success was the Payroll Protection Program (PPP). The paperwork was vast, but this forgivable government loan was effective. We will now apply for the forgiveness part and move forward. Most of our employees were able to keep working and get paid.

**What about church dues for 2020-2021?** As mentioned last year, there are no more church dues. The minimum recommended annual gift remains \$1,200 per family, or \$600 for an individual. However, the goal is for every active parishioner to tithe 5% of their income to the parish. “Five keeps us alive!” I am modeling this approach and giving 5% of my salary back to the parishes, and another 5% to other charities (i.e. Bishop’s Appeal, FOCUS college students, and the Jesuit Retreat House). God blesses us in return when we give in faith. People should *unselfishly* make whatever decision is best for their family without any guilt. Some people cannot afford the minimum and that is okay. Whether it is monthly, weekly, annually, or online, it is all welcome. Weekly giving is the best option since it enables us to be able to pay our contracted employees on time and keep our cash flow above zero. Thank you for the awesome success of the first year of this biblical, faith-based approach to church support!

**Are there other updates?** Currently we do not know the status of our upcoming joint capital campaign with the Green Bay Diocese (one by One). We want to be sensitive to the financial hardships that people are experiencing, and we will wait for the right moment. We still have some immediate plans, however.

This summer our playground will receive updates that are needed to better serve our smaller students. We will retool our cleaning and sanitizing processes for the school to meet the post COVID-19 requirements. We are looking for a qualified 4K teacher to expand our program. I am also looking to hire someone to design the bulletin every Wednesday. Our Home & School organization will need your support when they hold their make-up Spring/Fall Fling on September 12. The Christian Mothers will need you to bring your appetite to their Fall Dinner on October 21<sup>st</sup>. As pastor, I am forming a small leadership team whose primary purpose is to be of internal support, both spiritual and practical, as I lead this parish. This team will not replace any of our councils. Due to term limits, we need 2 new nominees for parish Trustee. We also need new council members for both the parish and finance councils. Finally, from July 19-24, I will be away (and completely unavailable) on a private retreat to spend time with the love of my life, the Holy Trinity.

Lastly, thank you for your faith and devotion. We continue to impact the culture and be faith-forward, with radiating effects of discipleship, infusing knowledge that leads to love, living transparently, and leaving impressive impressions in the local community. Keep challenging yourselves to greater conversion, more frequent confession, and livelier joy-filled Catholic faith. We will pull through this time together with the help of our Savior. Any questions? Please reach out.

Peace and Blessings,  
*Rev. Daniel J. Schuster*

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