

Dear Parishioners,

I hope that you have had a restful and healthy end to the month of August, and I pray that you all have a relaxing and peaceful Labor Day Weekend. I want to update you on a few happenings at our parish.

First, as has been promoted in the bulletin over the last month, we are excited to announce that we will be having a special Tuesday night class throughout the upcoming year entitled, “The Basics of Catholicism.” This class will take place on Tuesday evenings from 7:00pm – 8:00pm, and will alternate physical locations between Holy Spirit and St. Mary’s. The first class will be on Tuesday evening, September 15, 2020, at 7:00pm, at Holy Spirit Church, in the social hall. We will also be making this class available through Zoom so that all parishioners can have the opportunity to participate either by attending in person, or from the comfort of your home. If you wish to participate through Zoom at home, you must contact Cassi at Holy Spirit or Cindy at St. Mary’s to register. We will be sending invitations to watch through Zoom only to those who are registered, so that we have security in knowing who is watching and participating. The advantage of Zoom as compared to using a live-stream such as YouTube is that Zoom allows for live interaction between people watching at home and people who are attending in-person. That way, people at home can ask questions, etc. I encourage all our parishioners to consider taking advantage of this opportunity to learn more about your faith, especially during this time of the pandemic when many people may still be uncertain about attending Mass in public. Consider it a weekly dose of spiritual nourishment! We will be recording each session so that those who are unable to watch it live can watch it at a later time.

Second, a word to our faith formation families. As you know from the emails that you have received from Cindy, we *are* having faith formation this year. The plan is to hold classes in-person for those who are comfortable with this. Please know that we will take all necessary safety and health precautions. There will also be an online version available for those families who are not desiring to have their kids attend in-person due to health concerns. Either way, all families need to register for faith formation. As of right now, many of the families who were active in faith formation last year have not yet registered. Please understand that we need to know who will be attending, whether in-person or online, so that we know how many books to order, how many teachers we need, etc. So, if you haven’t yet, please contact Cindy Rowlee, our Religious Education Director, and register your children for class. Especially during these uncertain times, instruction and growth in the faith is more important than ever! I will be telephoning those families that we do not hear from in the coming weeks.

And here, allow me to make a final note about Mass attendance. It is true, the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass is still in place in Minnesota. No Catholic at this time is required to attend Sunday Mass. But allow me to offer a challenge to us. Undoubtedly, there are some parishioners who have legitimate and very understandable reasons for not attending Mass either on the weekends or during the week- perhaps they have serious underlying health issues that would make the contracting of COVID-19 particularly dangerous, etc. Because of this, there are parishioners who are currently not going out in public places, or places of gathering at all. But I would ask all of us to consider the following: if I am someone who is comfortable going out to other public places, such as the shopping mall, restaurants, or places of entertainment, and

yet I am not going to Mass at all, why is that? Is it possible that I am taking advantage of the fact that I don't *have to* go to Mass right now in order to do whatever I want on Sunday? Are we remembering that even though the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday is lifted temporarily, the obligation that we have to keep the Sabbath Day holy still holds? I think this pandemic presents each one of us with the opportunity to ask ourselves whether my relationship with God is where it should be, and if it is not, what am I willing to do to change that? Because one day (please Lord!) will we be able to return to "normal", and what we do to nourish and develop our faith *now* will determine what the practice of our faith looks like *then*. Be bold, brothers and sisters! Jesus is Lord, and He is here for you, inviting each of us to a deeper relationship with Himself. Let's make sure that we take Him up on it!

May God bless you and give to you His peace!

Fr. Steve Laflamme