

LET US
ADORE HIM
Christ the Lord

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Advent 2020

Dear Members of Corpus Christi Parish:

Blessed Advent greetings to all! It is a joy to be “connecting” with you today through the mail, since we are not able to connect with many of you in person these days. In some ways, it seems like March 13, 2020 and the beginning of the local COVID-19 pandemic was just a few weeks ago. In other ways, it seems like ages ago. March 13 was “the” day when all sorts of things began to happen. Students in our parish school were sent home with all their books and supplies, told that they would be learning from home for a while. (Of course, that “while” turned in to the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.) March 13 was the day of our annual parish Lenten Jonah Fish Fry. Literally, at the last minute, we had to change from our usual “eat-in” format to carryout only. Our sincere “thanks” for everyone’s patience and understanding that day. A few days later, on March 17, our Diocese announced the suspension of all public Masses and services. I spent the next two months, including Holy Week and Easter, celebrating Mass each day in a virtually empty church. We were able to return to “in person” attendance the weekend of May 23-24, but things are still far from the way they were.

As we prepare for the coming celebration of the birth of Our Savior, I wanted to share a few bits of information with you, to bring you as up-to-date as possible with news from Corpus Christi.

MASS ATTENDANCE. Since the re-opening of churches in our Diocese for the public celebration of Mass, we have seen approximately 35-40% of our usual attendees return – some regularly, others on a more occasional basis. Average attendance at the 5:00 PM Saturday and 8:00 AM Sunday Masses has been about 50-60 people, while the 10:30 AM Sunday Mass has averaged about 70-80 individuals. Of course, our church has been “marked off,” with seating only every-other pew and asking people to maintain proper social distancing in the pews where they are seated, unless they are members of the same household. We estimate that our maximum allowable attendance at the present time, under various restrictions, to be about 125-150 people.

SCHOOL MASSES. With our students’ return to “in-person” classes last August, they have been regularly attending Mass. In order to maintain appropriate distancing in the church, a slight adjustment was made as to which grades would attend Mass on which days. At present, students in Grades 5-8 attend Mass on Tuesdays and Thursdays and students in Grades 1-4 attend on Wednesdays and Fridays. At present, we do not have any “all school” Masses since that would exceed the maximum capacity of the church at this time. (In past years, Grades 6-8 attended Mass on Tuesdays, Grades 1-5 on Wednesdays, and all students on Thursdays.)

CHURCH SANITIZING. Since the return to public celebrations of Mass, the church is totally wiped down and sanitized after each Mass or other liturgical celebration. This has been accomplished by a great number of volunteers who pick up a rag, a spray bottle of sanitizer and who are able to get eve-

rything ready for the next event within a few minutes of time. We are so very grateful for all the effort that these volunteers have put into making sure our church is as free from germs as possible.

LIVE STREAMING. We began live-streaming services in our church on March 29, 2020, with equipment we rented from TPC Technologies in Niles, Michigan, and we have been live-streaming every day since then – not only daily Mass, but also other events held in our church such as Eighth Grade graduation, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, May Procession and Crowning, funeral services, our monthly Evening of Reflection, our annual Parish “Town Hall” meeting, and more. Realizing the importance that this outreach has not only to our parish members and friends, but also to many literally around the world, we made the decision to make a substantial investment to have our own equipment and to have a very permanent and professional installation in the church, so that we will be able to stream liturgies, parish activities, and events on an ongoing basis. If you have not yet joined us on the live-stream, you can find us on our new parish Facebook page. Simply go to our parish website, www.corpuschristisb.org. On the home page, under “New Mass Schedule,” you will find a link to our Facebook page and live-stream. You do *not* have to be a Facebook member to enjoy the streaming.

WEEKLY PARISH BULLETIN. With the suspension of public Masses, our weekly bulletin provider was also “shut down” and unable to print. For several weeks, bulletins were available only online. The printing of bulletins resumed on the Feast of Pentecost at the end of May. Of course, with only 35-40% of our parish returning to Mass, the majority of parishioners and friends do not receive a printed copy of the bulletin. Never fear! Our weekly bulletin continues to be available online. To access the parish news that is published each week, once again go to our website, www.corpuschristisb.org, and click the “Bulletin” tab at the top of the page. With just a couple clicks, you will find the most current bulletin, as well as the previous three weeks. There is also a link where you can sign up to automatically receive our bulletin in your inbox each week.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS. One of the things that we have tried to do since the pandemic began locally is to reach out by telephone to parishioners that we have not seen for a while. However, this has not proved easy, since many of the telephone numbers we have on record are no longer in service. Many of you have dropped your landline phone or simply changed your number. We estimate that at least 50-60% of the numbers we have on record no longer work. This makes it rather difficult to keep in touch. **We would ask you to please call the parish office (272-9982) to confirm your current telephone number, so that we can bring our records up-to-date.**

PARISH FINANCES. Obviously, with attendance at Mass curtailed because of the pandemic, one of the concerns for many parishes has been the negative impact this has had on a parish’s ability to pay its bills, meet its employee payroll, and simply “make ends meet.” While we have seen some cut in weekly income, the kindness, generosity, and love that you have for this parish has come through over and over, as we have not experienced this negative backlash to the extent that many other parishes of our Diocese have experienced. You have continued to support the parish through all of this. Many of you mail in your contributions, others of you simply drop them off at the parish office or in our mail slot. More and more of you have signed up for online giving and have continued your regular support, even when you cannot be with us in person. I thank God daily for the dedicated parishioners we have here at Corpus Christi and your willingness to bring good out of this difficult situation through your generosity. If you have not yet signed up for online giving and are interested, once again go to our parish website, www.corpuschristisb.org, and click on the “Online Giving” button in the right-hand column. You will then create your own user name, password, and personal details of your giving.

ANNUAL BISHOP’S APPEAL. In the midst of the pandemic, our Diocese launched the Annual Bishop’s Appeal in the early Fall. You most likely received a letter and a pledge card from Bishop Rhoades, inviting your response to this year’s Appeal. As in the past, each parish has been given a goal. Our goal this year is \$74,615. In past years, through your kindness and generosity, we have been

able to meet (and exceed) our assigned goal. To date, about 130 parish households (about 23% of our membership) have responded to the Annual Bishop's Appeal in some manner, pledging a total of \$57,540 (or 77% of our goal). To those who have already responded – **“Thank you!”** For those who have not yet responded, we are enclosing another pledge card and asking for your response as soon as possible – even if you are not financially able to support the Appeal this year. We are also enclosing an Appeal brochure, so that you will have current information about what your gift will help to accomplish. Please help us reach our goal again this year. It is **not** too late to make a pledge.

OTHER PARISH ACTIVITIES. In spite of the pandemic and the confusion and restrictions it brings, we have been able to resume some of our previous parish activities.

Our **Senior Group** has met for Mass and luncheon the first Tuesday of the month since August, the **Altar and Rosary Society** has been meeting each month since September, and the **“Well-Versed” Book Club** has also resumed regular meetings. Social distancing is practiced, along with the wearing of masks. Available snacks and other foods are now “pre-packaged” for safety's sake. The **Corpus Christi Men's Group** also meets monthly. While attendance at these monthly meetings is smaller than it has been, we are happy to see things moving ahead.

The **Corpus Christi Growing in Faith** small groups, cut off in mid-course last March, resumed in October, and re-started the series on the Eucharist. While most of the groups moved to virtual, online meetings via Zoom or other internet platforms, they were able to finish the season. Part Two of this series will start again in February and continue during the Season of Lent.

Our parish leadership groups – Parish Pastoral Council, Finance Committee, and School Board – have all continued to meet regularly during the past nine months, monitoring our parish's response to the Coronavirus and discussing other options and activities to deal with the situation.

PARISH SCHOOL. After spending the final quarter of the 2019-2020 school year in virtual or online learning, students and families were ready to return to in-person education for the 2020-2021 year. School opened on August 26, 2020, with all but 30 students ready for in-person learning. Within the first 4-5 weeks, 25 of the 30 who initially opted for virtual learning returned to the classroom and joined their classmates. There are many health and safety protocols that are being followed to keep faculty, staff, and students healthy. Masks are worn, there are no large group gatherings of students, lunch is eaten in the classroom rather than the Peterson Room, and the building is sanitized regularly. In spite of all these precautions, for several reasons, we did have to move to virtual learning for the two weeks just prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. Students returned in-person after Thanksgiving and are awaiting Christmas vacation, which begins December 18. Because of the two-week Christmas vacation and families traveling and spending time with others who may not be part of their immediate household, we will return on January 4, 2021, with two weeks of virtual learning before returning to in-person classes on Tuesday, January 19. We commend our school's administration, faculty, students, and school families for the dedicated and consistent efforts they are putting in to deal with the virus.

IN CONCLUSION. I know that this has been a rather lengthy letter and I congratulate you if you have made it through to this point. However, as you can see, the past nine months have been unlike any other nine-month period. So much has happened and we have not been able to communicate with all of you in the way we would prefer. I hope this update has been informative and beneficial to you.

As we prepare to welcome the coming of the Word-made-Flesh as he comes as the long-awaited and Promised One, we extend to all of you and your families prayerful wishes for a **Blessed and Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year!** Please know that you are in our prayers. Please keep in touch. We miss you!