

June 1, 2020

Parishioners of St. Landry:

It is unbelievable that this is the twelfth letter I have sent to you since we began social distancing and quarantining. Many of you I have seen at masses here at St. Landry on the weekends and during the week, but because of present directives there are still limits to our being able to really visit one another. This has been one of the most difficult parts of this whole experience; not being able to touch, to shake hands, to embrace one another.

Those moments in our recent past when we could not celebrate Eucharist together in person filled us all with a terrible sense of longing and yearning. It just did not seem right that at the very time we should be gathering to pray together and celebrate Eucharist together, we had to maintain safe distance. At least technology enabled us to communicate in limited ways. But we still missed one another, and we missed the physical experience of the Eucharist. Some of us still do.

For all of you who are still remaining at home to protect yourselves and others, please continue to do so. We miss you, but you must know by now that we continue to pray for you and remember you before the Father. And we want you to take care of yourselves. We humbly ask you to continue to pray for us. It is this connection in the holiness and efficacy of prayer that fills us with hope. This gift of prayer enables us all to belong, to be a part of each other's lives and hearts. This gift of prayer enables grace to dance throughout our community and lift up one another; this is the grace that binds us all together.

For all of you who have lost someone in the past couple of months due to the virus or any other illness or tragedy, know that you are never far from our deepest prayers. This has been such a difficult time to have to grieve and to do so in such a foreign way for us. We know the value of pulling together in death. It is the Catholic way, the Christian way to mourn together and experience resurrection together. To be robbed of the opportunity to be community together at a time of sorrow and grief made the experience even more fractured and broken. Because the church couldn't be the church for you at this most difficult time in your life, it seems we should somehow apologize. We are sorry we couldn't be who we are called to be at your darkest hour.

For all of you who had to cancel or postpone weddings, memorial masses for loved ones, first communions, baptisms, prayer-support groups, and graduations know how much it broke our hearts for you to have to go through these frustrations and disappointments. We also lift you up in prayer.

I think we have learned many things during these difficult times. We miss each other. We take so many things for granted, especially each other. We disregard the importance and value of human touch. We miss the sacraments celebrated as a community of the faithful. Because of habitual celebration of the sacraments, we have somehow forgotten what it means to be denied the very things that give us life and sustenance. We need the sacraments. We need to celebrate them together. We need to visit each other and listen to one another's stories about how our day went or the dreams and anxieties we have for the future. We need to laugh with one another, to celebrate the joy of life that is always in our midst. We need to share our stories of God's love and mercy with one another.

When we celebrated the sacrament of confirmation last Sunday afternoon, I thought what a perfect time for us to remember that we are truly the Church. This Confirmation of our young brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit filling new lives with new life.