

## Letter from Father Len

Dear Parishioners of Espiritu Santo Catholic Church & School:

I want to begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to all of you who have responded in various ways to the coronavirus challenge and all of its implications. I know that I join with Fr. Anthony and Fr. Cooper and with our Deacons and Religious Sisters in assuring you of our love, support, friendship and prayers. Actually, all of our scheduled Masses and prayers/novenas have continued without omission. Although you could not be present physically for these celebrations, you are present to us spiritually and, therefore, every one of you is remembered with love as we celebrate the Eucharist together.

Our challenging times continue. This is a time to reflect deeply on God's loving and merciful presence in our lives. It is also a time to recognize the degree to which we are interdependent on each other. To that end, our great Jesuit Pope Francis reminds us that:

*"The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own that trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity."*

At this moment, and at every moment, we are called by our Lord to remain in prayerful solidarity with all those who suffer from the COVID-19 virus, for those who love them, and for those who care for them. We are praying for those who have died and for all those who are working to alleviate their suffering, May God help us to end this plague and may He assist all those who are working for a cure.

Our staff has been deeply edified by the wonderful phone calls, cards and letters we have received in the parish office. I have shared these "gifts of grace" with everyone who continues to carry on the work of Jesus through the Church at this time. We continue our work at the parish. We are currently complying with directives and guidance from our Bishop and from the civil authorities. Our excellent school continues its teaching ministry. Teachers are working full time to promote learning using the latest technology and on-line educational initiatives. It is great to see how these modern means of communication have connected us together on a daily basis while learning must be conducted outside the school building. Our school building has been cleaned and sanitized and will be re-cleaned and sanitized just prior to the students returning once times are safer.

Faith Formation opportunities online are innumerable. Sue Sferra, our great Director of Religious Education, is in constant contact with parents and students. Our religious education program from Loyola Jesuit Press has more online activities than a person can accomplish in several lifetimes. These online resources help our children and teenagers to deepen their relationship with God and continue to grow in the faith of Jesus Christ.

Funeral liturgies, including wakes/visitations, Masses and committal services at the cemetery have continued without interruption. Our funeral ministry volunteers have met with each family individually following all social distancing regulations. Families have asked us to not allow parishioners into the church while these private funerals are being conducted. I thank everyone who has cooperated so lovingly in these times. Remember, our cooperation is an act of charity.

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Be sure to check out Fr. Anthony's Masses, Novenas to our Lady of Miraculous Medal, Scripture Reflections, Homilies and Devotions, which are being livestreamed daily. I want to thank him for this extraordinary and helpful effort. Please note that many Masses are being televised, including those of Pope Francis. Our Diocese and other parishes also have many livestream opportunities. The Cathedral of St. Jude offers a livestream Mass on Monday – Saturday at 8:15 a.m. and Sunday at 10:00 a.m. Fr. Anthony's Sunday Mass is at 10:30 a.m. By the way, it has been encouraging to see people coming to pray the Stations of the Cross in our outdoor garden. Many people have also prayed at our outdoor Marian Shrine, in the courtyard by the fountain and cross and by our statue of St. Anthony of Padua. I am sure glad that these sacred spaces now exist for our use as we continue our life of prayer, charity and service. Nature is God's cathedral!

The bulletin continues to be published each week and is available online. There you will find opportunities for Flocknote, online giving, our WeShare Program and other opportunities to support our parish and its ministries. Signing up is easy, safe, confidential and extremely helpful in these difficult times since our parish depends on you for its financial support. Tim Bergevin is available to help you sign up and can be reached at 727-726-8477 Ext. 326 or at [tim@espiritusanto.cc](mailto:tim@espiritusanto.cc). In this way, you will be able to make a continuing commitment to the support of the ministries of the parish. Deacon Steven has also prepared a number of spiritual opportunities and reflections for the bulletin online.

The front office remains open for your convenience Monday – Friday from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. We hope to extend these hours as soon as safer times arrive. I hope to write to you a little bit later to give you an update on the financial decisions regarding our staff and expenditures. We have made a number of decisions in consultation with various Diocesan Offices and with our own Finance Council. Justine Mullaney has done a magnificent job preparing a very in-depth and lengthy financial summary of expenditures and income, which has proven very helpful in these times when we have to make some difficult decisions.

I am aware that these times also affect your own personal lives. I am worried about some of you who are facing extreme hardships. Thankfully, our St. Vincent DePaul Ministry and food distribution ministry has continued. Thank you to all who have given food items and financial help to our charities for the homeless and poor in our midst.

We are working on a possible plan to offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation outside during Holy Week or immediately after Easter. I will communicate to you about this possibility in the near future. Please stay close to each other in prayer and check our website frequently for the latest updates or call my assistant Michelle at Ext. 303 at the office during our temporary abbreviated business hours. Fr. Anthony will also inform you of these opportunities during his livestream Mass.

Although these are challenging times, they offer many opportunities to grow closer to God and each other. In such moments, we need to make good decisions that respect the health of others and our concern for them. I am grateful that with rare exceptions, almost all of you have made the situation better, not worse. Thank you for your goodness and may God reward you for your kindness in these unprecedented times. I love you and assure you that God is with us, be at peace always!

Together with you in ministry,

