

Our Lady of Fatima Church

50 Van Winkle Place, Piscataway, New Jersey 08854 / 732-968-5555 / www.olfparish.org

March 25, 2020

Solemnity of the Annunciation

My Dear Parishioners,

Know that all of you are in my thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. I pray for you and your intentions every day when I celebrate Holy Mass, do my personal devotions and come before the Blessed Sacrament. I want to let you know that my heart is with you and that I am spiritually united to you despite the physical distance that may keep us apart.

I am sure that the “social distance” and isolation that we are experiencing at this time, as well as the fear of possibly you or a loved one becoming sick, is causing some of you great anxiety. Not to mention, the frequent news reports which feed our fears as we are told of the ever-increasing number of those affected by the Coronavirus. Sometimes I wonder if we would be better off not following the news. Yet, I do know that it is important for us to remain informed so as to know how to best respond to this terrible situation.

Especially near to my heart during this time are those parishioners who are most frail, the elderly and those with chronic medical conditions, since they are the most at risk of becoming terribly sick during this pandemic. I pray that God may give you strength and protect you from all danger, both physical and spiritual.

My thoughts also frequently turn to those who are in danger of losing their jobs or businesses and who worry about how they will support their families. I pray that you may be at peace and that your worst fears may never come true. If you have already lost work or income, I hope and pray that your situation may change very soon.

With each passing day, my heart grows sadder knowing that all of you are not able to receive the sacraments, most especially, the Holy Eucharist. I thank God that you can at least take part in the many liturgies which are transmitted daily on television and over the internet. Please know that our church is also open daily for you, from 8 am until 5 pm, with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 12 Noon until 3 pm. We will maintain this schedule until circumstances force us to do otherwise. Please regularly check our parish website for the latest information.

Although we are living in a time where there is much to fear, we cannot be afraid. We must remain steadfast in our faith, knowing that God is with us and that he permits all things for our benefit, even if we can't always see it that way.

Sometimes what appears to be a hopeless situation is in fact the opposite. Consider the events of Good Friday and the followers of Jesus who witnessed his passion and death. For most of them the situation must have seemed hopeless, and yet where they could only see death, the gift of life – true life – was being attained for us.

So often when we look at a situation such as the one we currently find ourselves in, we fail to see the hand of God at work. But it's there. Even now, if we look closer, we can see heroic and extraordinary acts of charity being displayed and great sacrifices being made by individuals throughout the world. Only God knows how many people, due to the spread of the Coronavirus, have grown in faith and charity, how many have reconciled to each other, how many have discovered time for loved ones and for God. Surely, we can be confident, that behind those large and dark clouds which cover our world, the light of Christ, like the sun, continues to shine brightly.

My dear friends, may this time of "social distance" and isolation increase our faith, lead us to greater works of charity and inspire us to pray more faithfully to God as we unite ourselves to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane who prayed that the Father's Will might be done. Let us pray for those who are suffering terribly from this virus, for those who have died from it and their families. Let us pray for doctors, nurses and all in the medical profession who put their lives at risk to help those in need. Let us pray for our civil and religious leaders who must make difficult decisions each day and let us pray for one another remembering especially those in our parish who are struggling with the effects of advanced age, poor health and extreme anxiety.

May the great Mother of God, Mary Most Holy, pray for us!

Sincerely in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Rev. Arlindo P. Da Silva
Pastor