

Weathering the Storm

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Every so often there are moments in life that alter our world view and how we understand ourselves. For example, those who lived through the Great Depression, most likely became very cautious with their spending (even later in life) and creative with their resources. I believe the Coronavirus Pandemic is one of those defining moments for most, if not all, of us.

Our lives are have changed and, in some respects, permanently. Some of the changes are a real challenge to get used to. For example, how many times have we had to walk back to our cars to get our face masks (which we forgot) before walking into the store or bank (etc.)? Other changes were not as difficult to get used to, for example standing six feet apart hasn't really seemed to be a real hardship for most people.

Some of the changes that have resulted from the pandemic have been good. In one sense Covid-19 has forced us to do some things in ways that have been an improvement from how they were done in the past. For example, and first and foremost, it forced all of us to "slow down." We have needed to slow our lives down for a long time and appreciate the smaller things more.

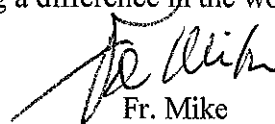
Also, here in the parish, we are now "Live-streaming" Mass every weekend. We most likely wouldn't have done this if it wasn't for the pandemic keeping so many from attending Mass in-person. This change has allowed us to potentially reach many more people, beyond the parish, than if we were only offering in-person liturgies. We have also added air purification systems in nearly every indoor space on the parish campus. Industrial air purification systems will be installed soon in the school gym and in the church proper. This will, I'm hoping, help us reduce the chance of spreading other illnesses besides Coronavirus especially during cold and flu season.

You'll see in the following pages one thing that hasn't changed in all of this: the dedication of our parish and school staff toward their respective ministries and the faithful support of people like you who have ensured that those ministries will continue to be funded. As a result of that support we have not only been able to "weather the storm" that is beating down on us, but to continue to thrive as a faith community. In fact, I was informed the other day that 8 people from our area have joined the RCIA and want to join the Church this coming Easter.

Contemporary Author Steve Maraboli once wrote, "Life doesn't get easier or more forgiving, we get stronger and more resilient." It is very reminiscent of what St. Paul said in his letter to the Romans (Romans 5:3-7) "*Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*"

I know the storm that has become known as Covid-19 has made many people in the parish stronger, more resilient and more determined to live the faith to the fullest extent possible in these trying times. It is encouraging to see.

I am so grateful for your continued support of the parish and school. In the midst of all the chaos happening in the world; your prayers, example of faith, words of encouragement, and financial support have shown the light of hope on an otherwise dark moment in history. I humbly ask you to please continue your financial support of the parish and its many ministries. We are making a difference in the world around us.


Fr. Mike

How our ministries are weathering the storm

Adult Faith Formation

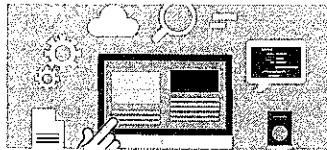
(from Nancy Joseph, Director of Adult Faith Formation)

An adult's faith is *formed* and deepened through the practices of study (Catholic Traditions), celebration (especially the sacraments) and Christian service (Works of Mercy). All three of these areas were impacted by the coronavirus. With the advent of the current pandemic and the need to observe social distancing, we've seen the following changes to our customary practices:

- Studies typically done in small groups continue to meet; however, they now use rooms with multiple tables so that participants can space themselves a safe distance apart from one another.
- Parishioners in growing numbers, have also tried individual or 'self-directed learning' programs available on FORMED.org., a Catholic online resource. We have seen about a fifty percent increase in members in the past year.
- Sacramental Preparation, particularly parent preparation sessions for a child's baptism, are currently scheduled as needed. Sacraments of initiation have been mostly celebrated between or after weekend Masses.

Religious Formation

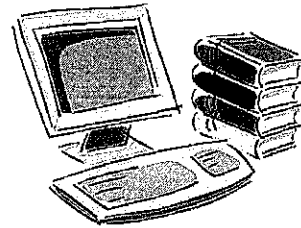
(from Michelle Parker, Director of Religious Education)



Google forms, YouTube channels, Zoom, and Snagit are all part of the debris that washed ashore in March. Although they were a bit alien to me, after much prayer I realized that they were the tools to help me rebuild what the storm destroyed. Slowly, I learned how to reconstruct the Religious Formation program with each new piece.

After watching many "how to" videos, I discovered Google Forms would allow parents to register and sign up for different programming. With more video lessons, I could tape myself explaining the fundamentals of receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion or outlining our Confirmation program. Other online classes would teach me that Zoom wasn't only a way to describe how fast someone drives but an avenue to continue faith formation.

Needless to say, rebuilding after a storm isn't easy. It's a little bit like finding your way in the dark. However, after each storm, a new day dawns, providing an opportunity for a fresh start. This feeling of opportunity is echoed by God in the book of Isaiah: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." Isaiah 43:18-19



St. Joseph Catholic School (from Chris Wells, Principal)

When schools closures were announced on a Friday in March, we were unprepared for a three-week closure much less being closed for the remainder of the school year. Our staff quickly made a plan and by the following Tuesday was online with our students teaching our curriculum. We didn't miss a beat in our instruction. Other districts were shut down for 3-4 weeks while we were already in stride facilitating instruction.

We've worked diligently to develop safety protocols for this COVID-19 era. In addition to air purifiers and sanitizing stations (see Dave's Facilities report), we've implemented additional sanitizing protocols throughout the day and deep sanitization every-day afterschool. Our classrooms are rearranged for social distancing for face to face instruction, and masks are used by staff during live contact with students. We have also implemented livestreamed instruction for students and families who have chosen virtual learning while staying home at this time.

While we work closely with our St. Johns public school, we have learned to become more independent as we have school days without public school busing every other Friday when the public school uses online learning. We also work closely with our local health department in the wake of people that may be in close contact with our school who may test positive for the virus. We have great families who have been proactive and quick in decision making and therefore have protected our school with contact tracing to this point. Even with all of this change and the fear of the virus sweeping our community as well as the U.S., we increased our enrollment number from last year. Thank you to all of the school and parish families for your faith in us in trusting that we are providing a safe, nurturing educational environment where we can share our faith in God and all of His glory.

More Adult Faith Formation (from Deacon Eric Elstro)

In addition to starting a Lenten series on the Beatitudes, this year I presented Bishop Robert Barron's video series entitled, *The Mass*, to our teachers to increase their understanding of the Eucharistic celebration. The hope is that their deeper appreciation of the Mass can then be translated to their students. Also, I took a diocesan program to become a mentor to all catechists. We plan to implement the mandatory catechetical program soon which should not only enhance religious formation of students, but bring teachers (and all catechists) closer to Jesus.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, I was unable to finish the Beatitudes series and had to stop all my home and assisted facility visits for communion. As a way to weather the pandemic storm, I continued writing my weekly bulletin column and increased its length to help fill the spiritual gap we all had to negotiate without Mass.

I am sure that I am not the only one doing so, but I have greatly increased my prayer time since COVID hit. I pray for us all because we all have been affected by the virus, in a variety of ways. The storm continues, and so will the prayers.

Facilities (from Dave Klein, Maintenance Supervisor)

These challenging times seem to be testing everyone's different area of ministry in the church and school. Some of the ways that the maintenance and custodial department has been weathering the storm is by cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting more and more. We've installed hand sanitizers throughout our buildings, and our air purification project is nearing its completion. We have 29 air purification units that are placed throughout the school and church. Soon, large units will be installed in the church, parish office, and school gym.

Other projects this year include the parking lot north of the church, new fencing on the playground/parking lot, and, in collaboration with the City, a safer drop off area in front of the school.

Youth Group (from Nancy Poff, Youth Minister)

Through topic nights, service nights, fun nights, and Praise Band, our Youth Group provides opportunities for high school teens to share their faith and their lives with each other. They learn and grow in understanding of how much God loves them and develop the skills to live according to God's plan and weather the storms of life.

Our theme for 2019-20 was "God is Greater Than Our Ups and Downs" which took on new meaning with the onset of Covid 19 in March.

Last year, we were only able to meet in September through February. During those months we had 85 teens that came to weekly gatherings, averaging 25-30 per week. We were unable to do our Teens Dance for Those Who Can't Dance-A-Thon, but we did raise \$1000 in entry fees and used that money to buy food and personal supplies for the St. Johns High School Food Pantry.

We also managed to get in lots of service opportunities before March: making blankets for Advent House, collecting canned goods for the Basic Needs Center, and, along with the school and religious formation programs, collecting more than a thousand pairs of socks for local charities during what's becoming our annual Socktober drive.



When Covid 19 hit and we were unable to meet, we communicated through social media with a variety of opportunities. There was a national Catholic youth ministry event that met on Sunday nights with speakers, games, and music. Teens were also connected to a daily singing of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, Diocese of Lansing's Fr. Joe Krupp's daily morning Mass and noontime Quarantine Catechesis, and Fr. Mike's Friday video tours and lessons. All of these opportunities helped our teens grow in their faith, gave them hope, and reminded them that "God IS Greater Than Our Ups and Downs"!!

St. Joseph Parish

Statement of Financial Position as of June 30, 2020

Assets		Liabilities	
Cash and checking accounts for main operations	\$ 383,691.45	Accounts payable	\$ 9,278.51
Parish savings accounts	952,798.15	Accrued payroll expenses	107,814.91
SCRIP assets	24,750.52	Other collections	22.00
Boy Scout assets	7,549.58	Deferred income	27,698.08
Building Fund savings acct	936,273.22	Deferred income-school fundraisers	128,546.25
Receivables	38,066.19	Prepaid tuition, lunch accounts	13,911.70
Inventories and prepaid exp.	<u>3,685.01</u>	TRIP credits	24,750.52
		SBA PPP loan payable	<u>273,165.00</u>
		Total liabilities	585,186.97
		Net Assets	<u>1,761,627.15</u>
Total assets	<u>\$ 2,346,814.12</u>	Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$ 2,346,814.12</u>

Financial Activity for the Year Ended June 30, 2020

Regular Operations

Church		St. Monica Ladies' Auxiliary	
Tithing	\$ 976,451.02	Income	\$ 2,578.00
Other income	57,980.10	Expenses	(2,648.36)
Expenses	(432,193.08)	Net activity	<u>\$ (70.36)</u>
Net activity	<u>\$ 602,238.04</u>		
Faith Formation		SCRIP Tuition Reduction Incentive Program	
Income	\$ 31,530.13	Gross profit on sales	\$ 8,792.29
Expenses	(157,972.57)	Expenses	(380.93)
Net activity	<u>\$ (126,442.44)</u>	Credits for families	6,508.26
		Profit for school	<u>1,903.10</u>
		Net activity	<u>\$ -</u>
Elementary School		Parent School Council	
Tuition and fees	\$ 541,748.80	Income	\$ 30,040.92
Fundraisers	90,671.14	Expenses	(29,883.31)
Other income	235,634.93	Net activity	<u>\$ 157.61</u>
Expenses	(1,303,959.26)		
Net activity	<u>\$ (435,904.39)</u>	Cub Scout Pack 572	
		Income	\$ 1,384.00
Building Fund		Expenses	(1,542.47)
Donations	\$ 32,917.92	Net activity	<u>\$ (158.47)</u>
Expenses	(450.00)		
Net activity	<u>\$ 32,467.92</u>	Boy Scout Troop 72	
		Income	\$ 7,795.52
Scholarships		Expenses	(9,051.26)
Donations	\$ 14,262.46	Net activity	<u>\$ (1,255.74)</u>
Scholarships awarded	(19,085.00)		
Net activity	<u>\$ (4,822.54)</u>		
Net regular operations			<u>\$ 66,209.63</u>

Other financial activity:

Witness to Hope Diocesan campaign	
Beginning of year balance	\$ 38,491.56
Parish share received	\$ 56,929.49
Project expenses	(74,212.28)
End of year balance	<u>\$ 21,208.77</u>

Sacramental Statistics for the year

Infant Baptisms	13
First Communions	15
Confirmations	45
Marriages and Convalidations	2
Anointing of the Sick	27
Funerals	22