



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup> I celebrated Mass online without a congregation present for the first time under the Diocesan guidelines to keep you safe from the Coronavirus. The first reading proclaimed was from the prophet Hosea. I sang the familiar hymn that takes the name of the prophet to begin that Mass, beginning: “Come back to me with all your heart; don’t let fear keep us apart.” In these days when there is fear of a virus sickening many and claiming lives, and we cannot be as close to others as we would like, our Lord is calling us closer to renew and strengthen our relationship with Him. It is not a time for fear; It is a time for prudent action, prayer, trust in God and love of God and neighbor. Let us unite in faith and prayer.

While public celebration of Masses and other parish activities are suspended until after Easter, I invite you to find new and creative ways to come back to God with all your heart. We are livestreaming Masses via this website and our Facebook page to help you stay connected with Christ in our Eucharistic Faith, though you will have to make a “Spiritual Communion” in lieu of receiving our Lord. They say, “absence makes the heart grow fonder.” May our hunger for Jesus in the Eucharist make us love Him all the more. If you find yourself home for longer periods, include additional prayer and reflection as holy habits that will help get through the crisis. Perhaps you can establish a family rosary time or use our website link to connect with Formed.org resources to open a world of content to deepen your faith.

Our office remains open to serve you, but since we are keeping a limited staff onsite while others work from home, we ask that you come only for essential matters that cannot be resolved with a call or email. I pray that you will persevere in holiness during this time of trial and rely on an act of contrition in case of venial sins, but if you are truly in need of Confession, call the office for an appointment. Baptisms will only take place in case of emergency. Weddings and Funerals may be celebrated if the group is limited to ten people. Anointing of the Sick should be requested only for the dying. Please be generous as you are able to continue your sacrificial gifts by dropping them off, mailing them in or making online contributions.

Finally, when you venture out in the community for grocery shopping or other essential errands, carry the love, hope and charity of Christ with you. Be kind to others and look for an opportunity to show the light of Christ in this dark time. As you endure hardships, be assured of God’s love for you and the prayers of the priests and deacons of St. Agnes for your wellbeing. May Christ strengthen us all and keep us safe and well until we meet again.

Prayerfully in Christ,

  
Very Rev. Robert J. Kantor, V.F.