

# *St. Robert Bellarmine*

*1424 First Capitol Drive South  
St. Charles, MO 63303*

16 November 2020

Dear Fellow Parishioners:

What a year it's been. Just when you think you've got a handle on things, new challenges arise. My newest one is ***Christmas During a Pandemic***. Last Spring, I was sure COVID would be gone by Christmas. But ... here we are ....

In this letter, I want to let you know how our parish is doing and also share with you our plans for Advent and Christmas. So, as Msgr. Hampe is fond of saying, here we go!

## Parish Update

Our Mass attendance has been picking up the last few months, but it's still less than half of what it was before the pandemic. The Archdiocese asks us to count Mass attendance every year in October. In 2019, we averaged 650 people each weekend, with an average Mass attendance of 160 people. This year, it's down to 300 people each weekend, with an average Mass attendance of 75 people. Because of this, our collections continue to be down 10-12%. We're doing all we can to hold down expenses. So far, we're bringing in just enough to cover our bills.

The overall generosity of our parish continues to be outstanding. We collected \$61,160 during the ACA campaign in donations and pledges, exceeding the Challenge Goal we were given by the Archdiocese. Only 57 parishes in the Archdiocese achieved that mark. In the recent collection for Retired Religious, we collected over \$1,700, and past experience tells us a little more will continue to trickle in. In the last three months, we've collected nearly \$8,900 for our St. Vincent de Paul Society. That money is used to help people living in our parish who are struggling, and I can tell you that we are getting many more calls this year than usual. Finally, there's our food bin for Sts. Joachim and Ann Care Service. It continues to be full every week, and has even been overflowing a few times in the past few months. You are all very generous, and I can only say, yet again, "Thank You!" on behalf of all the people you are helping.

## Advent

Advent begins on Sunday, November 29, 2020. As in other years, we will provide a booklet of daily reflections for the Advent Season. They will be in the church on Sunday, November 22, the Feast of Christ the King, and they'll be there until we run out.

During Advent, additional opportunities will be made available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In addition to our normal times before the 5:00 pm Saturday and 9:30 am Sunday Masses, Reconciliation will also be available at 11:00 am on the Sundays in Advent, 30 minutes before the 11:30 am Mass. There will also be two special Reconciliation periods: Wednesday, December 16, 3:00 - 4:00 pm; and Thursday, December 17, 6:00 - 7:00 pm.

I hope you all saw the letter sent recently by our St. Vincent de Paul Society. Because of COVID, we will not have our traditional Giving Tree this year during Advent. However, there are other ways you can contribute to help poor families, including gift cards and special donations. An envelope was included in that mailing. I know you will help.

## Christmas

Christmas poses a special challenge this year. In previous years, we have always had an overflowing number of people attend the Christmas Eve Vigil Mass. We can't handle that many people this year given the need to practice social distancing. With the size of our church and the number of pews, we can only accommodate around 100 people at each Mass, with maybe room for 10 more in the Gathering Space. Archbishop Rozanski will allow us to hold an extra Vigil Mass earlier than usual this year, and two of our retired priests have agreed to help us by making themselves available for those Masses.

Therefore, we will have five Christmas Masses at St. Robert this year:

- December 24, 3:00 pm – Vigil Mass 1
- December 24, 5:00 pm – Vigil Mass 2
- December 24, 10:00 pm – “Midnight” Mass
- December 25, 8:00 am – Mass at Dawn
- December 25, 10:00 am – Mass During the Day

To manage the number of people attending each Mass, we are going to use a reservation system for Christmas. If you wish to attend any of the above Masses, you need to call the office, speak with the Secretary, and reserve your seat(s). Her phone number is: 636-946-6799 ext. 10. We will give you tickets – one for each person who will be in your party. The tickets are free; they're just a way to control attendance. You can get your tickets any time during office hours, Monday through Friday, 8:30 am - 4:00 pm.

***At the Christmas Masses, only ticket-holders will be admitted.***

We are putting this word out early to give our parishioners the opportunity to get their reservations first. We will also be putting this information on our parish web site. Discuss it with your family and decide when you would like to come to Christmas Mass. Then give us a call and reserve your COVID-Safe seats.

In closing, I hope you and everyone in your family will have a happy, healthy, and holy Christmas. May God bless you always and keep you safe.

Yours in Christ,



Deacon Phil