

Dear St. Joseph's Parish Family,

This is a time of great challenge in our world as we confront the coronavirus pandemic. As difficult as things are right now, I believe we have an opportunity to continue to come together spiritually in prayer and in support of one another.

While we would certainly prefer to physically gather in our church to hear the word of God and celebrate the Eucharist at Mass, I know you understand that the temporary measure to suspend the public celebration of Masses across our Diocese and in our own parish community is necessary to contain the spread of the coronavirus. But despite our current challenges, there is much we can do as a faith community to continue to practice our faith.

First, let us pray for all those affected by the pandemic: those who have been sickened or have died, those whose employment or education has been disrupted, and all the healthcare workers toiling on the frontlines to provide care to the sick.

Second, I urge you to follow the directives from our state and federal government to limit your personal interactions as much as possible within your own circumstances.

Third, to respond to our deep-rooted desire to worship, I want to share some things that St. Joseph's Church is doing to stay connected and to help you continue to receive Jesus and the message of the Gospel. On the back of this letter, we have included information about all of the following and more:

- Ways to watch of Mass, including Masses that I will celebrate privately in our church.
- Worship and prayer aids available that you can use to pray alone or with your family.
- Scheduled open hours for individual prayer in our church that is being sanitized daily.

I would also recommend that if you are a regular user of online social media, following us on Facebook (@stjosephsmatamorasp) is one of the best ways right now to receive up-to-date information about our parish.

Lastly, if your circumstances permit, I ask you to prayerfully kindly consider continuing your financial support of our parish. Our weekly collections have ceased, but you can still mail your weekly offering to the parish. We will soon have available through our website, www.stjosephsmatamoras.com, online giving through WeShare. You may also donate to the parish through the Diocesan website, www.dioceseofscranton.org. I am grateful to you for your continued generosity.

I understand the feeling of loneliness that you may be experiencing. Our faith reminds us that we are never alone. God is with us, and we are all in this together.

Thank you for your prayers and patience and kindness. Let us pray in a special way for God's grace as we respond with hope to the challenges we face. And may we all be together again soon.

God bless you,

Father Joseph

Please scroll down for Prayer Resources...

Prayer resources for parishioners while public Masses are suspended

Video Masses—A video of Fr. Joseph celebrating Mass is available each week at *StJosephsMatamoras.com*. Daily Mass offered at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Scranton is streamed at *DioceseOfScranton.org* and accessible on the diocese's YouTube channel. Many other Mass broadcasts are available on the EWTN cable TV network and on Optimum Cable channel 19.

Open Hours—St. Joseph's Church is open daily for individual prayer on weekdays from 1:00–2:00 p.m. in designated areas that are sanitized daily.

Perfect Contrition—With the increasing difficulty individuals face in receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the faithful of the Diocese of Scranton are reminded that by having perfect contrition one can receive the forgiveness of sins apart from going to confession. Perfect contrition requires the following three things: 1) a love of God above all else; 2) a sincere desire for the forgiveness from sin; and 3) the resolution to go to confession as soon as possible when this health crisis subsides.

Sacrament of Reconciliation—Individual confessions can be arranged by calling the St. Joseph's Church office at (570) 491-2618 for an appointment.

Prayer for Spiritual Communion

*My Jesus,
I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You in my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive you sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace You as if You were already there
and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You.
Amen.*

Act of Spiritual Communion—It has long been the understanding among Catholics that when circumstances prevent one from receiving Holy Communion, it is possible to make an Act of Spiritual Communion, which is a source of grace. Spiritual Communion is an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament and lovingly embrace him at a time or in circumstances when one cannot receive Him in sacramental Communion. The most common reason for making an Act of Spiritual Communion is when a person cannot attend Mass. Acts of Spiritual Communion increase our desire to receive sacramental Communion and help us avoid the sins that would make us unable to receive Holy Communion worthily.

Prayers of Praise—In addition to praying for communion with the Lord, it is also important to take time to offer God our praise. This can be done by celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours or through a Celebration of the Word service, either of which can be celebrated at home. The following publishers have graciously made these daily prayers available for free online: **Magnificat** (*us.magnificat.net/free*); **Give Us This Day** (*giveusthisday.org*); and **The Word Among Us** (*wau.org/meditations*)

The Intercession of Our Lady—Lastly, let us keep each other and our world in prayer during these challenging times. In addition to praying the Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet, this beautiful prayer, composed by Pope Francis asking for the intercession of Our Lady—whom he calls Health of the Sick—may be offered.

Prayer to the Virgin Mary for Protection

*O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey
as a sign of salvation and hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick.
At the foot of the Cross
you participated in Jesus' pain, with steadfast faith.
You, Salvation of the World, know what we need.
We are certain that you will provide,
so that, as in Cana of Galilee,
joy and feasting might return
after this moment of trial.
Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the Father's will
and to do what Jesus tells us:
He who took our sufferings upon Himself,
and bore our sorrows
to bring us, through the Cross,
to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.*