



St. Anthony Catholic Church

825 Klevin St. + Anchorage, Alaska 99508 + 907 333-5544 + www.stanthonyak.org

June 5, 2020

Dear Brothers & Sisters,

Thank you for your patience throughout these past two months. I know the inability to physically attend Masses has been trying for you as it has been for me. Fortunately, we are now at the stage where we can gradually reopen our Parish; however, there will be significant changes in the way we operate to ensure your safety.

Before I speak about these new protocols, I would like to give you a brief update on the limestone wall project, as well as the recent relocation of our office. The limestone bricks inside the sanctuary were recently demoed and removed. Sadly, according to our engineer, the structure behind that wall was not adequate to support such a heavy load. The only way the stone could have been reinstalled was if we upgraded the frame. Such an endeavor would have been costly and untimely because it would take months to draft and receive the necessary structural designs and Municipal permits. As a result, the Business Manager, Finance Council, and I decided that most rationale decision was to refrain from reinstalling the wall and instead sheetrock, mud, tape, and paint it. This decision was the most economical and timely given the Parish's current circumstances amid this pandemic. By the time you receive this letter, the wall should be complete, and you will notice it the next time you enter the sanctuary.

On a separate note, we have also made another significant decision regarding our office building. That facility needs significant repairs, and the annual operating expenses such as maintenance, property insurance, and utilities accounted for a sizable portion of the Parish's budget. So, we have decided to relocate our office to the Parish Hall inside the nursery room to cut costs and be better equipped to navigate this current crisis. There is also potential for us to lease that building. We are currently in discussions with a closely related organization and will provide additional information if an agreement does materialize.

Regarding our Parish reopening, I would like to take a few moments to point out and review some of the important points contained in our COVID-19 mitigation plan. You can find a copy of this plan by visiting our website at www.stanthonyak.org/covid-19-updates or our Facebook at www.facebook.com/StAnthonyAK. The e-bulletin will include this plan as an attachment as well. **Our first weekend Masses will be held at their regular times on Saturday and Sunday June 13 and 14 at 5:30pm, 8:30am, 10:30am, and 5:30pm respectively. Weekday Masses will begin Tuesday June 16 at 9:00 AM. Weekday Masses are now Tuesday through Friday at 9:00 AM. To adhere to the prescribed social distancing guidelines, we must limit the number of individuals present at each Mass. At this time, we can have a total of 60 parishioners attend any particular Mass. Unfortunately, due to the social distancing mandates, not everyone who wants to attend a Mass will be able to do so. Therefore, we are asking that everyone reserve a Mass seat online by following the SignupGenius link on our Facebook, website, and e-bulletin or by calling the office at 907-333-5544. No reservation is required for daily Masses.** There are 393 active and registered families in our Parish so there can be over 1000 parishioners that attend Mass over the course of the weekend. To ensure that all of parishioners have an opportunity to attend Mass, we are asking that everyone consider only going to one weekend Mass per month since there are only 240 seats available on any given weekend. If you are unable to reserve a seat because they have already been filled and would still like to receive Holy Communion, please feel free to wait outside until after Mass as Communion will be distributed at both entrances. Please attend a live-stream Mass when you are able. Additional instructions will be provided below on the changes to

the Liturgy of the Eucharist and other parts of Mass, as well as the safety protocols for before, during and after the service.

I encourage those that are over the age of 65, and those who have an underlying health conditions to please remain home for your safety. For anyone who plans to attend a service, we encourage you to please wear a face mask, and stay home if you are experiencing any flu like symptoms. When entering the Parish sanctuary for Mass, you will be greeted by a safety minister outside that will verify your reservation and screen you and your household for any COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, coughing, shortness of breath, and sore throat. They will also encourage you to wear your face mask and to use hand sanitizer when entering and leaving the building. After the safety minister screens you and the rest of your household, another safety minister or me will instruct you on where to sit. This will help us maintain proper social distance while maximizing the number of parishioners that may be present.

There will also be several changes to the Mass itself. The most significant being the absence of music and the process for which Holy Communion will be distributed. During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, after I consecrate the hosts, I will place them in the tabernacle, as they will be distributed once Mass is dismissed and everyone returns to their vehicles. There will be a specific exit strategy after Mass, so I am asking everyone to wait for my instructions prior to leaving- pews will be dismissed in a particular order. Once everyone has returned to their vehicles, I and a Eucharistic minister will set up two communion stations at both entrances. An usher will then instruct one vehicle at a time to come forward and park at one of the designated areas in front of the sanctuary. Everyone in that vehicle will be asked to step out and come forward one at a time to receive communion. It will then be placed in your hand as normal, and you will step six feet away, lower your mask and consume the host. Afterward, you may return to your vehicle, and once the everyone in the vehicle has received Communion, you will be asked to leave the parking lot so the next vehicle may come forward.

In addition to these changes, I would also like to point out some other measures contained in our safety plan that will help discourage the spread of the virus. They include the following:

- No food or drink will be allowed
- Any other items cannot be left in the church
- Holy water will be removed
- Missalettes/music issues will be removed
- No singing or projecting of voice
- Omission of the sign of peace and offertory procession

I understand that this is a lot to take in in a short amount of time. However, these safety measures are necessary to protect our community and those most vulnerable to the virus. These new processes will take some getting used to and it will likely be our new normal for a while. By no means will it perfect the first few go-arounds, but what is most important is that we do our best to be mindful of the present crisis. We appreciate your patience and understanding and ask that you please continue to pray for our Parish, those who have died, their families, and those who suffer from unemployment and financial hardship.

Blessings,



Fr. Vince Blanco
Pastor