

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I want to take this time to thank you so very much for your perseverance and patience during this trying and difficult time. As I reflect back to the early days of March, it is hard to imagine the toll the Covid-19 pandemic has taken on so many communities. I recognize that there have been severe limitations to a way of life to which we have become accustomed. At that time, amid the abrupt change to our daily routine, I also note that it was a privileged moment to slow down and examine the fundamental values in life: family, faith, and community. It seemed almost unimaginable that we could proceed as a Church given our inability to practice our faith together through the sacramental and liturgical expression that is so central to our identity as Catholic Christians.

Granted, we have been presented with many challenges, among them meeting the spiritual needs of our parish from a distance; providing pastoral care for members of our community who have become ill or who feel isolated and overwhelmed by the goings-on around them; the administrative worries of losses in revenue which have severely impacted our budget while expending a significant sum on cleaning materials needed to keep our campus safe and healthy; the absence of community gatherings which mean so much to us and are an indelible part of our identity, the annual festival, Men's and Women's Club events, not to mention all of the school activities which bring so much hope and life to our community. Milestone sacramental liturgies such as First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Matrimony have been altered and I know this has not been easy.

Yet God in his inestimable love for us continues to listen to our prayers and provide for our needs. St. Pius X Church was honored to have been asked by Archbishop Cordileone to celebrate the first inside Mass (June 1) in San Mateo County since the outbreak of the pandemic; we then hosted the ordinations to the priesthood, transitional and permanent diaconate. This was the first time a priesthood ordination was celebrated in the history of our parish. What a grace!! So many of our parishioners unselfishly and enthusiastically stepped forward to welcome our archdiocesan family. I cannot tell you how many priests, religious and lay faithful from throughout the archdiocese contacted me to say thank you to St. Pius for bringing so much hope and joy during this difficult time. You exuded such optimism and gracious hospitality at a time when we need it the most. From the music to the environment, to the livestreaming capability to the most minute details, you rendered service with love and enthusiasm. You have no idea what this meant to our guests, and I cannot thank you enough.

Thanks to the generous financial support of you, our parishioners, and the technical expertise and apostolic zeal of Ryan Herbst, Raul Velez, and John Philpott, we have been able to livestream Masses and other spiritual events to our parishioners and many more throughout the nation and globe. I have received notes from Atlanta, GA and Tyler, TX and I know relatives of parishioners in Ireland watch us faithfully each Sunday! Imagine! We have livestreamed every Mass since mid-March. Although it was very difficult that we could not be present together in person for Holy Week, the Triduum and Easter Sunday, many expressed how the liturgies consoled them. Individuals have routinely watched out for their neighbors, providing emotional support as well as groceries and other necessities. We rarely speak of the innumerable kindnesses we visit upon each other, and yet this is a very real part of the fabric that binds us together as a community. On Saturday, August 29, a large group of volunteers, of diverse ages and roles in our parish, came together to erect a canopy for use of liturgies for the foreseeable future. Each of these examples cited, in addition to so many not named, reminds us of our mutual concern and need for one another.

These sources of light point us towards the grandeur of God. This service for the Kingdom echoes the words of St. Paul in his Letter to the Romans proclaimed in today's second reading. "Brothers and sisters: None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For this is why Christ died and came to life, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living."

Amen!

Fr. Tom