



The Catholic Community of Divine Savior

July 21, 2020

Dear Members of our Parish Family,

I write to say hello and update you on parish events, sharing news important to communicate to you. It's great we've reconnected with some of you but we miss those who can't be here with us. It will be so good when we can all be together again.

Our parish partially re-opened with weekend Masses by reservation (phone and SignUp Genius) at 4:00 pm Saturday and 9:00 am Sunday and daily Masses on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 am. We're so grateful to the *Re-Opening Team* that keeps us safe, sanitized, and organized here for everyone's safety. Under the direction of Domenica Duszynski and Matt Bratko, our Co-Chairs, they've been so generous with their time and efforts for our faith community and we are so grateful.

We are not able to have our regular schedule of weekend and daily Masses for two reasons: There are not the numbers that can justify this full schedule (people are still rightly fearful to venture out) and secondly, we simply do not have enough volunteers for the Re-Opening Team to engage their responsibilities for all those Mass times during the week and on weekends. You'll recall that Re-Opening team members must be in the low-risk category (under the age of 60) and that really limits the pool of potential volunteers.

We're also grateful to all of you who continue to support our parish financially. You make it possible for us to continue providing service (Sacraments, Mass, Anointings, and the additional varied needs of our people). Without your continued support, we would not be able to maintain our staff's continued service to everyone for parish needs and all the kinds of requests of our people. **We are so grateful for those who are doing all they are able to continue to support our parish family during this trying time. Please continue your faithful giving for parish needs, as our expenses remain, whether we are fully operational or not.**

It will be a while before we can fully re-open. We've received word from the diocese that plans to celebrate First Eucharist and Confirmations will soon be announced. It seems Pastors will be given the ecclesial permission to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation for our young persons who have prepared for this joyful milestone faith event. First Communion will be celebrated as soon as we can determine a safe way for families to gather to celebrate this joyous event. We are awaiting further word and direction from the Archdiocese.

There is a very critical need I want to call your attention to that is the responsibility of all of us.

If this pandemic has taught us anything it is the fullest realization of how blessed we are, compared to so many who are struggling. There is a need here in our community, but most of us have been spared of great struggles (though not all for sure). It has made us aware of how grateful we should be for our abundance and good fortune. We have witnessed incredible generosity during this time, as people have come to realize their real treasures- the gift of communion with their families and loved ones in safety, health, and security.

Our sharing parish of Saint Eulalia (now combined with Sacred Heart in Melrose Park under Renew My Church) is not as blessed as us and really struggling. Even in good times, the Maywood Community where they are located in economically challenged. It is filled with blue-collar and low-income wage earners, single parents, and many who barely get by holding things together materially for their family's needs. But I have witnessed their incredible goodness and spirit and the life of God's Son poured into their hearts in their deep faith and resilient spirits.

Every week we have a *Tuesday Food Caravan* leaving here at 2:00 pm bringing food purchased in large quantities from the monetary donations you have made to support this critical effort. For the past few months since the pandemic began, it has been funded by a small but exceedingly generous group of devoted parish members but the need is growing exponentially as more and more of their families find themselves in dire straits, without jobs and their meager, if any, savings exhausted.

We have found the best model is to ask for donations and we have some wonderful persons involved (Tom Kerber, Jan Magnuson, Domenica Duszynski, Jen Adams, Kacie Bratko, and Sheryl Depakakibo to name a few but not all) who then have shopped in large quantities and organized the sorting, loading, transportation, and delivery. We have adopted this model rather than asking for actual food donations for good reasons--to keep everyone safe during this pandemic, to not have to sort and pack small quantities which could never feed the need and to make certain we have enough of every item being given out they're requested from us to meet the growing demand.

We cannot continue to rely on this small core group of committed parishioners to fund this critical outreach, and just knowing how good you are, I believe you also do not want to continue this model. Besides not sharing the responsibility equitably, it is also not sustainable as the need continues to grow. Each week we need between \$1,500-1,600 to feed these families. If we all do our part and offer what we are able, through God's grace and Spirit I know, like the blessed loaves and fishes, there will be an abundance offered to nourish our sisters and brothers.

The people of Saint Eulalia/Sacred Heart keep overcoming obstacles. On Tuesday, July 14th they provided 419 meals and groceries for 106 families--working out of a garage in a parking lot being resealed in 90-degree heat. Hats off to their determination to meet their families' needs. Our Divine Savior Family sent five carloads of groceries and helpers. Shopping, loading, unloading, sorting, and unwrapping kept six adults and the same number of children busy but all with big smiles because doing good feels good, and the support of our Divine Savior parish community makes it all possible. **Your financial support and prayers are vital.**

Remember the words of Jesus: *I was hungry and you gave me to eat. What you have done for the least of my brothers you have done for me.* Someday we will all be judged not just on what we have done but what we have failed to do for others. Please live your goodness as a faithful disciple of Jesus by generously supporting our sisters and brothers who do not enjoy the abundance of our material blessings and gifts.

Here is how you can give so we can meet our \$1,500-1,600 goal every week and nourish lives and spirits. **To make it easy and convenient for all we have made it possible to give online through GiveCentral.** With one click you can live your best and fulfill the responsibility as a committed disciple. You will find a separate event on the GiveCentral website earmarked for Saint Eulalia donations. You can also drop off or mail an envelope to the parish office marked *St. Eulalia Food Pantry*. Checks should be made payable to Divine Savior. We are also setting up a Go Fund Me page. All of these gifts are of course tax-deductible.

Whenever I have asked you, you have always responded with generosity, caring, and faithfulness. Once again I'm asking you on behalf of hungry kids and worried parents. Saint Eulalia has told us without our help they would not know what to do to feed their people--that is how much they count on this food we provide that would not be replaced if we were not there. All of us here along with the people of Sacred Heart/ Saint Eulalia is tremendously grateful for whatever you can do.

Respectfully and gratefully in Christ, a friend of the poor

Sincerely,



Father LoBianco