

Dear Parishioners,

I write to you in this difficult time in our lives. The darkness of our times is deepening, and the hope in our hearts is tempted to wane. In these times we remember Jesus' words which sustain our hope:

"The Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."..."I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:27, 28, 33)

Our hope does not lie in some small worldly betterment or in the health of our body. This is all temporary. "For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as all our fathers were; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding" (1 Chronicles 29:15). If we believe in His Son, we abide in the Father's love, and we have eternal beatitude awaiting when our efforts here are complete. Recommit your hearts and minds, bodies and souls, to the Author of your life. Dispel the darkness with the light of Christ.

The trial we face is not a short term one. Many people will struggle with challenges ranging from job loss, to mental health, to family trials, and other. It is important to recall to mind, that as human beings we have both a body and a soul. If we tend well to both, we will be able to endure trials more surely as both halves of us are nourished. If we leave our soul to starve, we will be facing difficult trials in a weakened state. Without spiritual nourishment we will easily be crushed under the weight of trials. Jesus said to us in John 6:57, "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me". Coming to receive Christ in the Eucharist is of utmost importance for us as He infuses divine life into our souls giving us immense vigour. Again, "Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53). In a time of enduring trials Christ's life given us in the Eucharist is everything for us. Personal prayer also takes a very important second place to this. Pray daily!

With these increased lockdown measures we have new challenges, but also things that remain. The government of Ontario released a new document entitled "[Enhancing Public Health and Workplace Safety Measures in the Province wide Shutdown](#)" (Jan. 12, 2021). On p. 12 of this document, it makes clear that so long as we continue to keep the distancing, sanitizing, and masking measures we have already been keeping, churches are still allowed to have Masses with up to 10 people present.

This means that our new schedule, begun around New Year, will continue. The government allows us to be open, and so we will continue offer the Sacraments to you. I encourage you to receive God's grace through the Sacraments. For those not comfortable coming to the church due to health related fears, Archbishop Dampousse has extended the dispensation for Sunday obligation until further notice. I encourage you to face these times with faith and reason on your side, to watch Mass online, use our free FORMED.org subscription, and look forward to my upcoming audio series on our website.

For those coming to Mass I wish to remind you that the [Temporary Mandatory Mask Bylaw](#) from Ottawa Public Health under Section 2.1 gives those with "breathing difficulties" an exemption from wearing a mask. The new document speaks to this on p. 9 – "with limited exceptions". I have explained to you all on two separate occasions about my long-standing breathing issues. Both Ontario and

Ottawa Public Health has made provision for those with breathing difficulties so that they are not discriminated against or forced to compromise their health. I ask that you bear with my challenges. Soon enough masking will stop, and you will be free, but my breathing issues will continue, and with time only get worse.

Again, I encourage you to stretch your faith in this time of trial. Pray for the virtues of wisdom and knowledge, fortitude and long suffering. "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" (James 4:8).

I pray for you every day, several times a day. My day is becoming more and more one long prayer interrupted mostly only by pastoral work. The motto I took for my priesthood came from 2 Corinthians 4:15, "For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God." Pray that I may continue to be strong in my ministry. And pray with me for those in our parish boundaries, that God's blessings may descend upon us all.

In Christ,
Fr. Matthew Chojna