



OUR LADY OF LOURDES
CATHOLIC CHURCH

September 8, 2020 + Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Dear Friends in Christ,

For the past several years I have written to you, parishioners and friends of Our Lady of Lourdes, regarding our shared life together. This annual letter provides the opportunity to look back at the blessings we have received from our generous God and to look forward in faith to the coming year as we remain open to the guiding hand of God's Spirit.

It is hard to overstate the challenging times in which we find ourselves – amidst a global pandemic, social unrest in our community and nation, as well as the corrosive effects of political polarization. As you know, COVID has caused great suffering: significant loss of life; the loss of health; the loss of employment and attendant economic concerns; loneliness and anxiety and a pervasive unease that has afflicted many. This is a fraught time indeed. And yet, this is where Christians are called to step up, lean in and work together for greater justice, healing and peace in Minnesota, throughout the United States and beyond. Salvation history and the history of the Church attest that in the darkest of times, God's goodness and glory shine forth as God extends the divine hand of mercy and restoration.

It is also hard to overstate that during the past several months, confronted by trying circumstances, the community of Our Lady of Lourdes has remained strong, united and vibrant. In looking back at the past year - since my last annual letter - it is fitting to celebrate the blessings we continue to receive from God and the fruit of Our Lady's intercession. I offer a snapshot of the positive developments below.

First, the past year saw the formation of a new Parish Council, which is now meeting quarterly. This is a wise and thoughtful group and I have benefited greatly from their wisdom. Second, we have welcomed three new staff members: Marshall Collier – Director of Secure Environment; Michael Rainville – Director of External Relations and Deacon Rip Riordan. Their presence, wisdom and gifts will enable Lourdes to continue punching above our fighting weight as we respond to the complexities of a changing world, the desire for greater engagement with our community and the need for the pastoral care and formation of our parish family. Third, the parish successfully launched a new Lourdes Healing Ministry, under the guidance of Julie Craven, and Lourdes remains a leader in bringing the healing message of restorative justice to the broader Catholic Church. Fourth, generous outreach to those in need continues to be a hallmark of Lourdes, under the able guidance of Julie Ditter and the Justice and Charity Committee.

Fifth, through the generosity and commitment of parishioners and friends, and the diligence of Mary Asp and our Finance Council, I am happy to announce that the parish finished the fiscal year which ended June 30, 2020 in the black! This is no small feat and I am grateful to many for making this happen. Parishioners who leaned in and generously extended a helping hand, enabled the parish to continue its vital ministries in this time of uncertainty and fostered the continued employment of our parish staff. Sixth, last fall, Lourdes assembled a new Facilities and Maintenance Advisory Committee which includes many experienced and knowledgeable parishioners who skillfully advise Mary Asp and me on the current and future needs and priorities of our precious jewel. The parish commenced a number of critical maintenance projects last year, including repair work to our elevator and new air conditioners for the parish house.

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Additionally, our parish communications continue to lead the way and the quality of our new livestreaming capabilities combined with Dr. Jacob Benda's sublime sacred music has provided an extraordinary experience of Catholic liturgy for those who have joined us for worship. Lastly, I am grateful to parish leaders and staff who did an outstanding job shepherding Lourdes during my sabbatical and for the great work of Fr. Evans, Christine Griffith and Linda Ferris in the area of sacraments. The sacramental life continues to pour forth at Lourdes through weddings, baptisms, first communions, funerals and confirmations.

Looking ahead to the coming year, I anticipate continued challenges, but also opportunities for growth and adaptation as we follow the wise words of Pope Francis to focus more acutely on what is essential, the ruse of our self-sufficiency and the emptiness of superfluous things laid bare. For Catholics, the most essential aspect of our lives is our faith in Jesus Christ and his gracious invitation to experience the divine life and love of God. The pinnacle of this experience for Catholics is the Mass – the Eucharistic celebration which is the source and summit of our faith. The challenge of course is that the reality of COVID has significantly limited Mass attendance throughout the world. I am happy to announce that, beginning September 12, the Saturday 5 p.m. Mass will return. Confessions will take place from 4:00 – 4:45 on Saturday afternoon in the sanctuary, or by appointment. Those who wish to attend Mass are required to register on the parish website or via a dedicated phone number (763-645-4146). Masks are required, per state and archdiocesan guidelines. I am grateful to our Liturgical Logistics Group for its hard work on liturgy guidelines and seating for Mass and the countless volunteers assisting in various ways.

Faith formation has been a priority for me as pastor and has become a particular strength and charism of the parish. Our theme for this coming faith formation year is *See, Discern and Act*. This year's focus follows the traditional Catholic approach to the moral life and our life of faith. Our theme is particularly relevant to our present circumstances as a nation and world that groans under the pernicious effects of untruth, apathy and injustice. This fall we will take up each of these topics and then apply them to particular issues in the winter and spring. In addition, I am excited to announce a new series that will launch this month and will be available to parishioners, friends and neighbors. *The St. Anthony Sessions on Justice* will critically examine issues of justice in light of Catholic teaching. More information to come. The gift of Catholic social teaching (CST) remains largely unknown by many Catholics. I am taping a 14-part Introduction to CST. The first installment will be available to parishioners and friends after the 10 am Mass, September 13th. Lastly, the children's faith formation program will likely take place via a hybrid model that combines virtual and in-person formation. Parents - stay tuned.

Lastly, this coming fiscal year will continue to pose challenges from the economic downturn and decreased Mass attendance and Sunday giving. I am deeply grateful to those who continued to give last year, those who stepped up their giving and those who contributed to our *United in Faith* appeal. Your support was critical to maintaining our parish life and ministries and meeting our financial obligations. I humbly ask for your support once again and invite broader parish participation as we seek to journey together through this unprecedented crisis of COVID.

May the God of Jesus Christ - a God of goodness and compassion - be with all of you and may the generous and fruitful intercession of *Notre Dame de Lourdes* assist our beloved parish.

United in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Daniel Griffith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Rev.", "Daniel", and "Griffith" being capitalized and prominent.

Rev. Daniel Griffith