



**ST. FRANCIS**  
of ASSISI PARISH  
A Roman Catholic Community in  
LITCHFIELD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

## A LETTER FROM FATHER JEFF TO THE PARISH

Wednesday, March 18th 2020

Dear St. Francis of Assisi Parish Family,

I hope you are all well and in good physical and spiritual health. The purpose of this letter is to communicate some thoughts on our current situation, the nature of this crisis, and some important measures we must take, as members of a community, and as beloved children of God and soldiers of Christ Our Most Blessed Lord, and his Our Most Holy Mother, Mary.

In 1917, the Blessed Virgin Mary speaking to Lucia, one of the three children to whom she appeared at Fatima said, "Don't lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God." In these days of physical and spiritual crisis, we need the help of Our Lord and Our Lady.

### **The Nature of the Crisis**

It is important that we see that our current national and global crisis serves a purpose in God's plan of salvation. God permits all suffering and turmoil, in this case global pandemic, for the purification and conversion of the Church on earth—including each one of us—and the entire world. Before the snake brought this virus into China, it introduced it to our first parents in the Garden of Eden. The Latin word virus means "poison". In the book of Genesis, it is clear that the poison of the serpent, or satan, can only enter the world through the sin of man and woman, and when they sinned, the whole world changed, and all humanity was damaged. Sin has "poisoned the well", so to speak, of our human condition, bringing with it all suffering and death. As St. Paul said, "The wages of sin is death". Sin is certainly nothing new, but throughout history, seen especially in the Old Testament, but even in the last 2,000 years, there is a recurring cycle that plays out: The Chosen People, whom God set apart, misuse their freedom to commit grievous sins such as idol worship, sexual sins, and every other sin. When the community embraces these sins, making them acceptable and desirable to most people, God withdraws His hand of blessing and protection upon His People and all the world. In other words, God allows the poison of sin to infect the whole body of a society that embraces this sin as a good. The misery that follows this embrace of sin forces man to his knees in humble repentance. He begins to realize there is a God, that he is *not* God, and he is nothing without God. Only then, is man ready to allow the true God to begin reordering his life according to the way God made him to be. Then, all society finally moves toward rebuking evil and returning back to a true love of God and neighbor. Jesus Christ makes this reconciliation and conversion possible for sinners, and accomplishes it for us on Good Friday, and at every Mass. As St. Francis declared, "We adore you oh Christ and we praise you, in every tabernacle throughout the world until the end of time, because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world!"

### **Why is the Lord permitting us to have trials and suffering in our lives today?**

Because the acceptance of sin and immorality worldwide and in individual lives is becoming so great, and love of God and neighbor so diminished, only His permitting of suffering will bring people back to God. Last century, culminating in the sexual revolution of the the 1960s, sexual sin has led to much evil, such as sterilizing marital love, fornication, pornography (on average first viewed by age 8), sex exploitation and abuse of all kinds, culminating in the killing of the unborn (9 million worldwide since of the start of

2020 alone). This grievous acceptance and tolerance of sin and evil call out to heaven for God's justice and mercy. I'm reminded of this each time we pray the prayer to St. Michael, and whenever I look up at our statue of the archangel who is holding the scale in one hand and the sword in the other. He's an angel of protection, but also an angel of God's justice and wrath. The scale he holds is tipped as the weight of sin and the blood of the innocent cry out to God. The angel is poised to strike with his sword. All this said, our prayers, offerings, and penances are all the more important to mitigate the punishment that is deserving of the world, and at the same time, praying and suffering for a real conversion of the world, and the end of the acceptance of evil in our lives and society.

In 1917, at her third apparition, Our Lady of Fatima said, "You have seen Hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world, devotion to my Immaculate Heart." True devotion to Mary, praying the rosary, a new deeper reverence for the Holy Mass and reception of Communion is needed, and an end to idol worship not only in the Amazon, but of so many false gods that are put ahead of Sunday worship and private devotion to God.

So, it is good for us to pray for an end to this pandemic, but it is better to pray for the conversion of all hearts away from sin, and to make reparation for these sins.

Sin is truly the worst kind of evil, and the suffering that accompanies an unrepentant life is the greatest, and is eternal. So let's pray for a repugnance of all sin and evil, that we all may turn more fully with contrite hearts and in trust toward the God of love and mercy.

#### **Measures Taken At St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Accordance with Bishop Libasci's Directive**

- All parish meetings and events will be suspended until further notice. This includes the Stations of the Cross and chowder suppers during Lent.
- Public Mass is suspended until further notice, and there is currently no obligation to attend Sunday Mass. I will be celebrating private Mass at the regular Mass times during the week and weekend. I will pray especially for the parish and school families at these Masses, and of course, for the Mass intention.
- Even without public Masses being celebrated, our parish will still need to pay its bills. We encourage all of our parishioners to consider Online Giving during this time: [www.osvonlinegiving.com/430/](http://www.osvonlinegiving.com/430/). This is something you can do temporarily, and shut off once public Masses resume. If you have any questions about Online Giving, please feel free to contact the Parish Office. When the building is unlocked, there will be a donation basket in the gathering space for anyone who wishes to make their contributions that way.
- St. Francis Church will be unlocked and open for prayer during the hours that it is usually open during the week.
- Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will take place all day on Mondays and first Saturdays.
- I will offer the sacrament of reconciliation 30 minutes before each of my private Masses.

This is the strategic plan, and is of course subject to change according to further instructions and mandates. We can't pretend to know how this pandemic will unfold, or what the duration or degree of suffering it will inflict. But with firm hope and trust in Our Lord, who triumphs over sin and death, and with the powerful help of St. Joseph, whose Feast day is March 19th, and most especially Our Lady who announced to the world at Fatima and declared, "In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph!"

With love in Christ Our Lord,  
**Father Jeff**