



St. Joseph Catholic Church
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sjccotati.org

July 21, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

I hope that you are all staying safe and well under the COVID-19 pandemic that we have been living through this year. I just want to keep you updated on what has been happening at the parish. I apologize to those of you who have not been able to stay updated by way of the parish website, www.sjccotati.org, or through the parish Facebook page, www.facebook.com/sjccotati/. I invite you to, if you can, to please read my previous update letters, which can still be found on the parish website so that I do not have to make this letter any longer than two pages. We have not been able to send out a mass mailing because we did not have the volunteers/personnel to help since the office was closed and I did not want extra people in the parish office because of the shelter in place order. That being said, this is our first attempt at a mass mailing to keep you informed. Quite frankly, the COVID-19 pandemic and shelter in place order caught us off guard and unprepared. Plus, we are not accustomed to composing mass mailings. As a result, I have created a parish *Flocknote* account so that we can keep you updated by way of text messages and emails. You can sign up by visiting sjccotati.flocknote.com, or by texting sjccotati to 84576. If you would like to receive instructions in Spanish text sjccotati to 202-765-3441. Please be sure to follow the link to complete your registration and choose which groups you wish to receive updates from, aside from general updates. Also, you may enter an email and mailing addresses because we will also be using this service to send out emails and postal mail aside from text messages. Flocknote will be very useful for us because things can change at any given moment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We began having public Masses at the beginning of July. They were taking place in the church and we were following state and county regulations in order to keep everyone as safe as possible. However, two weeks into July Governor Newsom told us we could no longer have Mass indoors in Sonoma County. We now have our Masses outside the parish hall near the BBQ area. Our Sunday Mass schedule consists of two Masses: an English Mass Saturday evenings at 4:00 PM and a Spanish Mass on Sunday mornings at 11:00 am. Both of the weekend Masses are livestreamed on the parish Facebook page and later uploaded to parish YouTube Channel. Links to these can be found on the parish website listed above. We have been getting around 30 – 50 people attending the weekend Masses (including our volunteers). Let me take this opportunity to remind you that the obligation to attend Mass has been dispensed during the pandemic, so you are still not required to come to Mass. If you choose to come to Mass, please be sure you read my letter of instructions for Mass on the parish website. In terms of the Mass intentions that are on the calendar, Fr. Plass and I offer an individual private Mass every day, so your Mass intentions are being prayed for daily. It has taken a lot of effort and work to prepare for and to have public Masses, so I really want to thank all of the volunteers who have made this possible.

We still have exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament outside the parish hall every day from 10:00 AM – to 8:00 PM. When possible, we also have Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament at 8:00 PM. Likewise, we have confessions every Friday evening from 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM outside the parish hall near the religious education office. The sacrament of anointing of the sick is continually being administered to

those who need it. Remember that Fr. Plass and I are also here for you should you need any form of spiritual counseling/direction. So please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

The parish office is open for its regular hours, but we are only conducting business over the telephone, email and through the mail slot for the safety of the parish staff. All of our email addresses and directory of extension can also be found on the parish website. This may change under the new restrictions, and Silvia, Marisela and Norma may have to work from home again.

First Communion and Confirmation Masses are being scheduled and Norma Suarez, our Director of Religious Education, is informing parents of the dates. In terms of the sacrament of confirmation, Bishop Vasa has given the priests of the diocese the faculty to confirm our parishioners through the end of the year. I also remind you that under this pandemic, this is not a good time to have a large gathering/party to celebrate the event. Big gatherings where people do not take the proper precautions have also led to the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

In terms of religious education for the coming year, we will be having online meetings to discuss registrations and how to conduct the classes this year. This is a challenge for us because we are limited for meeting space and cannot really use the method we used in the past. Please be patient with us as we address the plan for the coming academic year. Our Religious Education Coordinator will keep you informed on this matter. *Flocknote* will be very helpful with this for those who sign up to receive notices.

The parish Men's Club scholarships process for this could not get started because of the COVID-19 pandemic, so the scholarships will be given in December. For more information regarding the Men's Club Scholarships please contact Joe Crespan at 707-782-8059 mbajoec@yahoo.com

I also want to give you a brief update on our parish finances. Since we have not had public Masses our income has dropped to 47% of normal. We were able to get help from the federal government through the SBA Loan Program that the diocese was able to get for us, and that helped us with two months of salary and benefits. Unfortunately, about four months have now passed since the shelter in place went into effect. However, we are fortunate enough to have reserve funds in the parish, but we also do not want to deplete those funds. I want to thank all of you who have continued to support the parish during this time by mailing or dropping off your donations to the parish office, those of you who give by way of online giving and those of you who have supported us with your prayers. You will also be receiving a financial report from the parish finance committee shortly.

Finally, please know that you are all in my daily prayers because this is a difficult time for all on spiritual, emotional, psychological, physical, financial and many other levels. I also ask for your prayers because this pandemic has challenged me too. I am human, I have my faults and I have my limits. Praying is probably one of the greatest things that we can do right now. Through God's grace we will get through this together.

Your Servant in Christ,

Fr. Raúl Lemus,
Pastor
St. Joseph's Church