

March 18, 2020

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

During the past several weeks, we have quickly seen the coronavirus/COVID-19 grow from an overseas threat to one that is now a present reality for all of us. I wish to reassure you that during the past week, our Parish and the Diocese have responded promptly to this ever changing situation by implementing the recommendations from our public health professionals in order to prevent the spread of this virus. This week, Bishop Gainer announced that, out of great concern for the faithful, he is temporarily suspending all daily and weekend public Masses in the Diocese and is asking parishes to close their buildings.

Please understand these requests are for your safety, the safety of your fellow Parishioners, the safety of those at-risk family members living at home with our Parishioners, the safety of our Parish Staff, and yes, the safety of your Pastor. In no way are we removing God. On the contrary, we are greatly increasing our online presence and are providing a range of resources for your continued spiritual growth. As your Pastor, please be assured of my continued prayers for you, your families, my brother priests and deacons, our religious, and all those affected by this virus. These rapidly changing circumstance may lead some to experience feelings of panic, fear, worry, and doubt. As we read in Isaiah, our Lord tells us to not fear for He is always with us and will uphold us during times of trouble.

I pray that all of us will first face these times with prayer, asking for our Lord’s healing for the sick, protection for those caring for the ill, and for His comforting hands on those who are fearful. Next, although the doors to our Parish are closed, we should continue to find ways to live our faith and to also find strength through the Word of God. Several Parishes throughout the Diocese are live streaming Masses to Parish websites and social media. A listing of the Parishes streaming their Masses can be found at www.hbgdiocese.org/coronavirus.] Even if you are able to watch a live-streamed Mass, I highly encourage you as a family to use the Sunday Prayer at Home resource that has been sent out.

The mission of Immaculate Conception BVM, and St. Rita’s will continue during these times. But in order to continue our work, we need your support. I ask you to pray for our Parish, our Diocese and our Country. I also ask for your continued financial support. Without your gifts, our Parish will struggle to continue our most basic functions. I know these times are challenging, but I humbly ask for your continued financial support so that we may continue our vital functions. Gifts can be made by mailing your check to the Parish, or through using our online system. Thank you for your continued support of our two parishes. May God keep you safe, continue to bless you and your families, and keep us all in His loving care.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Peter Di Tomasso, M. SS.CC.

Immaculate Conception BVM

St. Rita’s