

Saint Charles Borromeo Church  
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March 28, 2020

Dear St. Charles Parishioner:

On my first weekend as pastor of St Charles in June of 1987, I wrote a feature for the parish bulletin. Every week since, I have written a column. When I began, that column was typewritten; then I moved on to a word processor. Because of today's extraordinary health circumstances, I must write to you electronically. My purpose in writing, from the beginning, was to share parish news, to seek your opinions, and to ask for your help. Who would have thought, at the beginning of this month, that by the end of March we would be under "stay at home" orders and practicing a six-foot "social distance" from one another? Competent medical experts tell us that we must endure several more weeks of relative seclusion, increased hand washing, and threat of contagion.

History tells us that the last pandemic in 1918, as World War One was ending, created similar misery. Our grandparents and parents went on to deal with the Great Depression and then World War Two. All were difficult times. But today's enemy is particularly deadly, so widespread, and very unpredictable. We take confidence and a measure of courage knowing that those before us conquered their foes -- even in challenging times!

I come to you as a person of faith. Scholars tell us that one phrase can be found 365 times in the Scriptures; that phrase is "Do not be afraid!" We are called to deal with a great challenge this Lent. This time of purification and renewal promises to stretch beyond the usual forty days. We worship a Savior who was crucified and we carry His name. The Gospel call to "take up your cross and follow Me" has a very personal meaning for each one of us this year. We are enduring a very long and painful Good Friday. But we know that we are called to see beyond, even to the promise of Easter Sunday. As a people of hope, we believe that Jesus who prayed that He "might be spared this cup" knew that the Father would not abandon Him. Nor will He abandon us.

St Paul wrote "three things last: faith hope and love...and the greatest of these is love!" We may be inconvenienced in ways great and small during these days; some may have lost their employment. Many may need our help. But we must stand in awe of the truly heroic among us: doctors, nurses, medical personnel and emergency first responders. They are in the front lines fighting daily for all of us. Pray for their good health and strength! We may not be working in an emergency room, but in smaller ways we can be life-savers, too: phone elderly family and neighbors, safely run a few errands for the homebound, hold on to those close to you. In these times, small kindnesses and small sacrifices can mean so much.

Our gifted school principal and teachers have developed new styles of long-distance electronic learning for our students. Our parish staff and secretaries were told to stay with their families. Our maintenance staff sanitizes our church daily so that you can visit there for private prayer and devotion 7:00am to 7:00pm daily. We priests continue to say Mass, weekdays and Sunday, at 11:00am. You will find that Mass on our website [www.stcharlesonline.org](http://www.stcharlesonline.org). You may pray live with us at 11:00am or watch at a later time. Following state of Ohio orders, our physical contact must be limited, so the parish pastoral staff began making telephone calls to all parishioners last week. (We discovered that about 20% have changed their numbers, but did not give the new information to the parish office -- but that's a problem for another day!)

May your week be blessed. We will pray for you and we ask you do the same for us!

Father Carlin