

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Back on **Ash Wednesday** on Feb 26 we began our Lenten journey together. We heard the words of the prophet Joel, *“Return to the Lord with your whole heart with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; Rend your heart and not your garments and return to the Lord your God.”* Little did we know the weeping and mourning that would lie ahead in China, Italy, Iran, South Korea and now in the United States and throughout much of the world.

Despite the hardships, fear and anxiety that are around us now we put our trust in the Lord. Bishop Hartmayer wrote to us, **“God does not abandon us; he goes with us even now in this time of trial and testing. In this moment, it is important for us to anchor our hearts in the hope that we have in Jesus Christ.”**

Instead of letting anxiety cripple us we can do a few things. First let us turn to the Lord in **prayer**. Below I am including a **novena** (nine days of prayer) from the Knights of Columbus. Please pray it nine days in a row beginning on Thursday, March 19, Solemnity of St. Joseph, Guardian of the Church (or if you get this later then, a day of your choosing). Let us intercede for all of those who will be on the **front lines** of this crisis: doctors, nurses, health care professionals, first responders and also all government and civic leaders.

Let us remember that **we are a community**. Be aware of those around you. If we do enter into a period of quarantine or lock-down as in Italy be aware of your neighbors, especially those who are elderly or in need of special assistance. If you feel overcome with **fear and anxiety** you may reach out to our priests and deacon for prayer and/or counseling.

At the direction of Bishop Hartmayer and following the recommendation of the CDC, of no groups gathering of more than 10 people, there are to be **no public masses** celebrated in the diocese of Savannah **through the end of March**. We will reassess this on April 1. Depending on further recommendations from the CDC we would like to have the **church open at times** certain days for prayer and reflection. This would mean few people in the church spread out maintaining social distancing. We would post church openings via email, our Website or Facebook. Please see the next page for those addresses.

We will not offer a parish penance service this Lent, but we will publish some times when the priests will be in the church **hearing confessions**, again maintaining social spacing.

In case of the need for **Anointing of the Sick** or Last Rites please call our emergency numbers: Father Tim (706-799-7726) or Fr. Chris (813-300-3287). If you are experiencing a financial crisis we have some limited means of assistance. Please contact Deacon Larry at: 912-399-7627. For normal parish business please contact Nadine at: nativity@darientel.net or by phone at 912-437-4750.

Since we will not be together for at least the next two weekends I would like to offer some spiritual resources for our continued journey in the desert:

-I am excited to announce that we now have a Parish Subscription to **Formed.org**. This is a treasure trove of Catholic movies, videos and teachings – for adults and children. We may use it for free under the St. Francis Xavier subscription. All you have to do is go to www.formed.org and select “sign up.” Then select “I belong to a Parish or Organization” and type in **St. Francis Xavier Church and School** and you will be prompted to a free sign up which will give you access to thousands of Catholic resources. On our Facebook page we will list some favorites to get you started! Here are **some other resources**:

-Novena for Protection:

<https://www.kofc.org/en/resources/news-room/11036-protection-prayer.pdf>

-Free **Magnificat** (daily readings and written reflection) at

<https://us.magnificat.net/>

-EWTN TV has religious programming and daily mass.

-The **Cathedral** in Savannah offers Sunday Mass on the Diocesan website or the Cathedral website at 10:00 a.m.

-Daily Mass and the Divine Office: <https://www.sistersofmary.org/>

-USCCB.org (the **US Bishops’ website**) offers daily readings and a daily video reflection.

-WordonFire.org by **Bishop Robert Barron** offers Sunday homilies and daily meditations and many Catholic resources.

-We will look at offering a **Facebook Live Mass** this weekend. We will post info on our website.

-Dynamic Catholic offers a daily Lenten videos at “Best Lent Ever.”

Remember that the Lord is watching over us! Despite the change in schedules and routines Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8) No matter what the next few weeks hold we have Jesus, our Church and each other!

Fr. Tim McKeown

Fr. Chris Hassel