

Dear Parishioners,

Vaccine Distribution

Hope is around the corner with the distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine! Although the Mecosta County Health Dept. is not currently taking appointments at this writing, the fact is that the vaccine is being distributed and will continue to do so once more is made available. I want to encourage **everyone**, when their time comes, to get the shot. We are at a critical point in regards to the virus. We've heard that a new strain of the virus which spreads more easily is making its way around our country and is probably right here in our state. Therefore, it is imperative that we get vaccinated just as soon as we can- if not for us, for those around us. We have to stop this virus from spreading and causing more disruption and even death.

I have heard that some people are refusing to take the vaccine on moral grounds. I would urge everyone to go to the diocesan website and read our bishop's statement regarding the morality of getting this vaccine. You can also read the statement by the Bishops of Michigan on the board in the back of church. If you would like a copy, call the parish office.

I just want to encourage everyone to get vaccinated because your life and the lives of those around you are too precious, too valuable to lose.

Year Dedicated to St. Joseph

On Dec. 8, Pope Francis declared this year to be dedicated to St. Joseph, the husband of Mary and the foster father of Jesus. The Holy Father made this proclamation on the 150th anniversary of Pope IX declaring St. Joseph as the Patron Saint of the Universal Church. It was at that time when the Feast of St. Joseph began to be celebrated on March 19. We are asked to get to know this saint throughout the year. St. Joseph is an important saint in my life. He was the saint that I took for my Confirmation name way back when I was confirmed. I looked to St. Joseph when I was ordained to the priesthood and ever since prayed that St. Joseph would be present in the years to come and help me to always be a better priest. I invite you to reflect on how St. Joseph can impact your life as a spouse, a father and as a person of faith.

To help us celebrate this year dedicated to St. Joseph, I have ordered some icons of the Holy Family. These 4x6 inch icons can be placed on a wall or a table that oversees your family. This would make a wonderful gift for you and your children. An icon is a different kind of religious picture than what we are used to seeing. This is a form of art that is popular in the Eastern Church and even in our side of the Church. One very famous icon is the Icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Each icon is created with prayer and is intended to inspire us to grow in faith. That is my hope for all of us who place the Holy Family in our homes. There is a \$15 donation that will be asked to help defray the costs of the icon. The icon will be on display in the parish office and in the back of Church.

Felix Younger Food Drive

We are again planning the Annual Felix Younger Food Drive for God's Helping Hands. For those unfamiliar with Felix, he was very active in God's Helping Hands for many years and with his untimely death three years ago, it seems appropriate that we honor Felix by donating food to the pantry. The drive will take place on the weekend of Super Bowl Sunday. I know that many people gather for Super Bowl parties in normal times. However, that is not wise because of the virus. I would encourage you to think about donating the food that might go toward a party on that day to the pantry instead.

And as we remember St. Joseph this year, we might wonder if Mary and Joseph relied on the food pantries of their day when they made the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, from Bethlehem to Egypt and from Egypt to Nazareth. They may well have relied on the generosity of others for food to get them where they needed to go. By our donations of food, we may well be feeding the Holy Family in our midst.

Now that we return to the Ordinary Time of the Church Year, I again want to thank everyone who made our Christmas celebrations possible. I think because of what took place over the Christmas season, we lit a bright light that will continue to shine throughout the new year.

May God Bless you and your family throughout 2021- Fr. Tom