

May the blessings and peace of the Lord Jesus be with you and yours.

I trust you all are well and safe. And that you know of our prayers.

Thank you for inviting us these days into your homes –into your domestic church. This is no 3 in the series of videos/and printed updates we plan - just to keep us connected in this time apart –in this desert time. These efforts are the combined work of a village: of your priests, parish staff and others from the parish. We thank them for their concern and their labors of love.

At this time, I want to thank you for your understanding of and patience with the directives of our diocese, country, county, and parish as to gatherings and safety measures. These directives are intended to keep everyone safe. Not just ourselves. Those in civil authority and the medical staff admit they don't know how this virus works. They are on the front lines of this battle: we are not. We need to trust them and help them as they live their callings. They are our guides in these times.

In the previous announcement (of March 15), you can find the contact information for your priests in case of an emergency or if you have spiritual or material needs we might help with. We want to assure you we are willing, available and ready.

As you know, the recent directives from both our President and our Governor are that gatherings cannot be larger than 10 people in a space. Therefore, we ask you to monitor the gatherings you may be in: especially those here on Ironbound - at confession times, and when you come to pray in the church. If there are more than 10 people already gathered, please wait outside the door until a person leaves. While in "the confession line", please stand at least 6 ft. from the other penitents. Charity demands we keep the other safe.

The House of Mercy has, in great part, moved their food distribution efforts outside (even then with the mandated 6 ft. distance) and their workers are gloved. For rent assistance, interviews are conducted via

phone. If you get bored or antsy at home, you might call them to see if they need a hand. (for example, all donations must now be wiped down by volunteers before they are distributed). And, when you shop, don't forget those poorer among us. The cupboards of WHOM quickly run bare in times like this. They especially need shelf stable food: pasta and sauce, canned veggies, canned meat, beans.

Thank you to those who have mailed in their offerings/tithes in this time when masses and activities here have been suspended and to those who give electronically (through online giving). As you know, bills are rarely suspended.

I mentioned in the beginning of this statement, the goal is to stay connected in this time apart. So this Friday evening from 7-8pm, we invite you, if you wish, to call in to your priests with your questions or with your ideas of how - in this desert time, in this time apart- we might deepen the bonds of our communion with the Lord and with each other. What are the "eyes of your mind" seeing and the "ears of your heart" hearing in these quieter days not of our choosing? This question was inspired from the snippet from a book addressed to Autolycus by St Theophilus of Antioch, a 2nd century bishop. The full passage can be found in yesterday's Office of Readings.

Until our next update, or until we physically meet again, keep the faith, stay well, keep an eye your neighbors, pray for the parish and especially for those on the front lines of this battle. Families: use this time to pray together and play a little more than usual (get out the cards and those board games in the closets).

As both my mother and a friend of mine both have said "This is a Lent like none other." They're right: but if Lent has brought us this, I can't wait to see what the Easter season will look like.

I end with this act of spiritual communion in this time of abstinence. (not printed due to copyright)Pace e bene ed amore,. Peace, good, and love.