Outline

Greeting

Opening and purpose for letter

What’s coming up next

Listing of things that have taken place in the past year at your parish

Call to action

Closing

Dear parishioner (specific names),

Greetings and peace to you and your family. As we all know, the past year has been quite different and challenging for all families -- both among our own relatives and for our “parish family.” I want to keep you updated on some of the many things that have happened in our parish in the past months and are planned for the future.

I believe that this year of St. Joseph, as proclaimed by Pope Francis, is a fitting time to reflect upon what has occurred in individual families and how we can grow as brothers and sisters in Christ.

For so many, families mourned the loss of loved ones and felt isolation due to restrictions. Parents became teachers, tutors and coaches. Many workers faced reduced wages due to lack of work, while others labored in medically risky situations. Please know that all of our parish families have been in my prayers.

We all look forward to being back to “normal” – although we can’t really say what “normal” will be in a post-COVID 19 world. Although many parishioners have returned to regular Mass attendance, it has been with visible changes – the wearing of masks, blocked off pews and distanced seating, no holy water, to just name a few.

I look forward to the day when all parishioners will attend Mass comfortably. I hope that our celebration of the Eucharist will be more vibrant and filled with spirit than ever.

In efforts to make bring us together more fully as Christ’s family in our parish, I am working with parish staff, pastoral council, worship committee and others to plan and host an event/liturgy which will help us all to renew and reconnect in person as a parish community.

Other parishes throughout the Diocese of Saginaw, as well as Bishop Gruss and the chancery staff, also are working on similar initiatives. I will be sure to communicate more about our parish event as details emerge.

I do not want to leave you with the impression that our parish has been inactive during the past year. We certainly have persevered in living out our mission. Since last spring, we have:

[Suggested things to list]

* Held xxx parking lot/outdoor Masses
* Livestreamed daily and Sunday Masses on [whatever platform]
* Completed faith formation for xxx children and xxx adults (most virtually)
* Welcomed xxx into the church at Easter Vigil
* Had xxx infant baptisms
* Celebrated xxx marriages
* Had telephone outreach to all parishioners
* Continued [community neighborhood breakfasts, food pantry distributions] in amended formats
* Started {or completed} xxx project/renovation
* Continued youth fellowship groups via video conferencing
* Held prayer groups and Bible study using virtual meetings

As we continue to move through the ever-changing phases of this pandemic, I urge you to make wise choices about the health and safety of yourself, your family and others. I encourage you to pray through the intercession of St. Joseph, that:

* All fathers and mothers imitate the Holy Family as loving spouses and parents in care and education of their children
* The sick and elderly find strength and peace
* All who labor do so safely and earn just wages
* All who minister to others be inspired by Joseph to work humbly for God
* All families grow in love and joy, as did Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Please know that the parish staff and I are available for your pastoral needs. Do not hesitate to call us at the parish office. I look forward to the time, hopefully very soon, when we will all gather together in person as a parish community.

Blessings and peace,

Father A.P. Riest