

March 16, 2020

Dearest Assumption Parishioners,

In any crisis, the first need is communication: people want to know what is going on, what is changing, and what they are supposed to do. I hope that our parish has served you well so far in this regard with our e-mails, our website, and our phone calls to individual ministry heads. We are quickly discovering what is working well and what is not and are laboring to repair any shortcomings. Hopefully, this will make us even better at communicating and connecting with you once normalcy resumes!

Now that we are beginning to settle into our new (if temporary) reality, the next most important thing on my mind is **making sure that we can still pay our parish staff**. As I explained in my [bulletin letter in January](#), our parish budget was already facing a more than \$40,000 deficit, which, if left unaddressed, would cause our parish to run out of money by July 1, 2022. My plan then, as now, was to allow the budget I inherited to stand for the rest of the year, and then make changes effective July 1, 2020. Unfortunately, this Coronavirus crisis has upended our best laid plans, as it has all over the world.

So now I am worried about paying our parish staff, because nearly every dollar of parish income comes to us from Sunday collections. **Without Sunday Mass, our normal monthly collection of \$64,000 falls all the way down to \$12,000 (which is what we are given through automatic online donations)**. Other than a few big items that are paid once a year, like our insurance bill, the great majority of our costs are monthly, and we need \$40,000 each month just to cover our staff salaries. I do not want to increase our deficit or spend more out of our savings, but these are starting to look like necessary realities.

Of course, I am also aware of the fact that the stock market has fallen and that many businesses have slowed down to a crawl. Assumption Parish is not the only institution worried about its survival, and many families are wondering how they will get through the next month. I want you to know that we are all in this together, and so **I will be donating my salary back to the parish until we resume public Masses**. It is not much, but it is something, and it seems like the right thing to do.¹ **But I cannot ask our staff to do the same**, because they, unlike me, often have children to support, a mortgage to pay, and a harder retirement picture to plan for.

So, what am I asking of you? Honestly, nothing more than to continue supporting your parish even when you are not here on Sunday. If most of our parishioners try their best to send in their donations like they normally would, we will be able to weather the storm. If you *are* able, and want to send in an increased donation, that could be very helpful, too, since we are expecting that our service industry parishioners will not be able to contribute what they once could. Eventually we will return to normalcy, and when that happens, I know we all want our parish to emerge as strong as it ever was.

Please find below information from Karen Zuther about how to contribute during this time.

You are ever in my heart and prayers,



¹ I want to be clear that this is not something every priest can do. I am blessed with an economic situation stable enough that I can make this kind of sacrifice. But please do not hold me up as a standard over and against other priests. This simply makes sense *for me* in *my context*.

Ways to Contribute during the Crisis

1 ONLINE AND AUTOMATIC

We have several options available for giving electronically in a safe and secure way.

1. You can set-up an automatic “bill pay” with your bank, which automatically sends a monthly check to Assumption on the date you specify. There is no fee to the parish for this method. Contact your bank to initiate the payments.
2. You can set up an automatic payment through Vanco, the company that processes electronic payments for us. The parish pays a fee to Vanco for this service, so we would prefer that you select monthly donations rather than weekly, but we are grateful for any gift you choose to give. You will find the link to Vanco on our parish website, www.assumption.org. The link is on the home page just below the dove.

For those of you who are already giving electronically, THANK YOU! If you are giving weekly through Vanco, please consider switching to a monthly frequency or possibly changing to bill pay through your bank instead. Either of these actions will save money for the parish.

2 THROUGH THE MAIL

If you don't wish to give online, you can still mail in your regular stewardship gift to:

Assumption Parish
2116 Cornwall Ave
Bellingham, WA 98225

3 IN PERSON

As a last resort, we will also have a donation box available in the Gathering Space.

As a reminder, the church will be open 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday, and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Sunday until we resume the public celebration of the Mass.

Contact Karen Zuther in the parish office if you have any questions. Thank you for your extreme generosity through the years and even now during this crisis.