

September 21, 2021

Dear Saint Benedict Parish Family Member(s),

During this time of transition from summer to fall, I pray this finds you and your family happy and healthy. I have two items of importance pertaining to the physical and financial health of our parish that I would like to share with you.

1. COVID Protocols. I thought we were “home free!” I was even ready to throw my masks away. Darn! Here we are again. I know you take the health of our parish family members seriously, as do I. The Alert Level for the Municipality of Anchorage was raised to “Extreme” last week. I also received the enclosed letter from the Providence Medical Executive Committee, an apolitical body of physicians on the “front lines” during this pandemic. It provides the most chilling account I have read to date on the severity of the Delta Variant. Providence Hospital is now rationing care, due to the extreme demands of this ongoing pandemic. Dr. Walkinshaw writes, *“As we watch the case rates rise in our community, we anticipate an escalation in COVID hospitalizations in the coming two to four weeks. What is already a stressful situation could rapidly progress to a catastrophe. We need your help.”* Please read the enclosed letter in its entirety. We have an ethical imperative to act swiftly to help those affected by the ongoing pandemic. With delegated authority as Pastor I am implementing the following protocols, effective September 25th and continuing through the Masses on November 1st, All Saints Day.

- a. **Masks required at all parish and school activities.** With the one exception of Eucharistic Adoration, where only 1-2 people are present in the church, masks or face shields will be obligatory at all Masses and parish/school functions, following CDC guidelines. While we will endeavor to have masks available at the door, please bring a mask with you whenever possible.
- b. **Social distancing.** Subject to future change, at this point social distancing remains up to individual discretion. We will reopen the social hall for all Masses, allowing for additional seating.
- c. **Streamed Masses and Holy Communion.** All Masses will continue to be livestreamed, with Holy Communion available immediately following each Mass.
- d. **Singing.** Subject to future change, as singing is an integral part of the celebration of Mass and all attendees will be masked, we will continue congregational singing.

Thank you, in advance, for your understanding, cooperation, and personal sacrifices for the good of all.

2. Change in “United in Mission Appeal” Parish Project. With the concurrence of the Parish Finance Committee, I would like to change our parish project associated with the archdiocesan “United in Mission” appeal, from refinishing our pews to renovating the outside of our parish church. Some background is in order. This project was never meant to be more extensive than simply painting the exterior of the church. We raised \$10,000 through last year’s appeal towards this end. We discovered during the surface prep phase that the existing cedar siding was no longer serviceable. We replaced the siding as well as the protective fire sheathing and “wrap” underneath. In order to give our church a truly beautiful exterior appearance (to match our now beautiful interior appearance!), we’re taking the additional steps of applying a simulated rock surface and adding other beautiful architectural elements. With a committee of five and under the advisement of an architect, I believe you will love the final appearance. I need your help, please! Only 14% of parishioners have supported the “United in Mission” appeal to date, pledging about \$58,000 toward our parish goal of \$88,000. Any shortfall by Dec. 31st becomes a parish assessment. **Please do your part to get us to the \$88K. Thereafter we can raise up to \$44K, tax free, to use toward completing the renovations.** In order to answer any questions, I’ll host an informational meeting on Sunday, Sep. 26th, at 9:15am.

Thank you so much for helping your parish during this time of both spiritual and material need. Please call me on my cell (317-9042) with any questions or concerns. May God bless you and your family!