

Dear Nativity Parishioners:

I have a few things that I want to share with you this week. For one, we are at about the halfway mark of the Easter Season. Easter is 50 days and we are at the midpoint. That is why I keep using pictures of the Risen Lord for these updates.

The news is filling our heads with lots of numbers; day x of the pandemic, x number of new coronavirus cases, x number of deaths due to Covid-19. These numbers can be disheartening.

I was at a meeting of pastors the other day and one of them said he is not counting the days of the pandemic, rather, he is counting the great 50 days of the Resurrection. Not a bad thing to do.

This week I want to share some other numbers with you:

Welcome to Flocknote!

A couple of years ago, I contracted with Flocknote to be the service provider for large parish communications. I chose Flocknote because it not only allows me to send mass emails, but also to text everyone who is on the system.

I did a lot of advertising when we first signed on to the company and, when we register new families in the parish, I try to encourage them to sign up right then and there.

At the time that the pandemic broke, we had roughly 846 parishioners on the Flocknote system. That was pretty good but, in comparison to the total number of parishioners, it wasn't even close.

Since the pandemic hit, it has become more critical to have good communication with the entire parish. With that in mind, I made the decision to import our entire parish census into the system. We have gone from 846 Flocknote participants to over 3,000. That is a huge jump in number.

I plan to continue to send one Flocknote out each week to keep the parish up to date on what is happening here at Nativity and to communicate the instructions that we will receive from the Archdiocese regarding the reopening of our church.

I promised then and I promise now, I will not hound you with Flocknotes. I will try to only communicate important information to you. At this point, I am doing a weekly update since there is no printed bulletin right now or for the near future.

I hope you will find this means of communication helpful.

The Parish Livestream

I have been amazed at how many people in our parish (and other parishes) have made use of our Livestream service. I said this already, that before the shutdown of the churches, we would get seven or eight people on an average Sunday for our Livestream broadcast. I guess that is ok. My hope was that most people would be coming to Mass instead of watching it on their computer.

The service is provided mainly for the homebound. I think it is a good thing to have. Well, since the shutdown began, it is not only a good thing, it is a blessing! Just by way of example, our Easter Sunday Mass had over 600 viewers. Now, on our regular Sunday Mass we are getting between 400 and 500 viewers. Weekday Masses are over 125 viewers usually.

You cannot imagine the emotional rollercoaster that I have been on this week as the Livestream system started failing. That machine in the choir loft has been our lifeline. Knowing that there are people on the other end of that camera has made all the difference for us. Many priests have to pre-record their Masses. It's just not the same.

On Tuesday morning I celebrated Mass not knowing the system went down and when I found out, I was disappointed. Jokingly, I said it was because I had a fabulous homily that nobody heard. The truth of the matter was that I was disappointed because over 100 people signed on for Mass but did not get to see or hear it.

Wednesday morning, the same thing happened. I could not get the livestream to stay on. Mass had a completely different feel knowing that Fr. Brian and I were truly alone. Thursday it took three attempts to get the thing up and running. On the third try, I walked away assuming that it was going to shut down. It didn't! I went through the whole Mass thinking that we were alone again. I was so happy to get word after Mass that the stream held!

Now, we have a new device that will send the stream out. It is a borrowed one for the time being, but we will be purchasing our own very shortly. I hope this gets us back on track with being able to stream all our Masses worry-free!

You can find our video feed on our parish website at noolp.org. Just hit the button that says video stream.

I thank you all for your patience during these rough couple of days of broken streams.

Nativity's Daily Rosary

On May 1st, Nativity began our own parish Rosary on Zoom. This follows the model that the Archdiocese does every night at 8pm. So as not to compete with them, our parish Rosary is at 4pm.

Pope Francis asked that every Catholic pray the Rosary every day in the month of May. Our parish staff suggested that we offer this opportunity for our parish family to pray together. The easiest way to access this is on our parish website. Just click the Rosary icon and you will get there.

If you feel called to lead the Mysteries, you can also sign up on our homepage of the website at noolp.org. Please consider this for one of the open days in May. So far, we are averaging about 60 participants each day for the rosary.

Thanks Again!

I want to take this moment to thank everyone who has joined our Parish Giving Program and everyone who has been sending in their contributions by the postal service since the shutdown has started. It is a tremendous help to our parish to continually receive your generosity which allows us to keep serving you during the shutdown. I am grateful not only for the donations you are making but also for the very kind and supportive notes you are sending with them. Fr. Brian and I are grateful for all the support you are showing to us and for the kind things you are saying in your notes.

May God bless you!

Fr. Joe