



Saint Augustine of Canterbury Roman Catholic Church

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April 22, 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Children:

Can you imagine:

**No Mass/No Eucharist
an empty school?
Who would have ever thought this could happen?**

But here we are in uncharted waters and each of us is taking it day by day! I know the Governor is going to review where we stand by May 15th and make further decisions so let us continue to pray for our state, country, and world.

I want you to know how YOU ARE MISSED here at our school! An empty school is so sad, and yet I know education is taking place for our school community through online teaching! So the mission of Saint Augustine School continues to shine. Before the announcement of the school closings by the Governor, Sister Mary Louise and the faculty were very hard at work getting ready for that announcement. I want to commend Sister Mary Louise for her foresight in preparing for this “historical moment” in the life of our school!

We are blessed with great technology and as I walk to the school office to touch base with the dedicated staff working hard behind the scenes, I see Sister Mary Louise constantly on her computer “zooming” with students and teachers – sitting in on classes taking place – attending meetings with Diocesan school officials and other principals! I want to commend our teachers for their dedication and commitment to continuing the gift of our Catholic education and for the hours of work and preparation they are putting into their classroom instructions. I have other teacher friends in the public school system and they have shared with me the hard work that goes into their preparations and how they AND EVERYONE longs for the days we can go back to OUR CLASSROOMS! I am grateful to the parents for the extra demands being placed on you to work in these challenging days with your children in their online education.

Unfortunately, because of the present situation, we had to cancel the First Holy Communion Mass on Saturday, May 2nd. I did send a letter to the parents giving them some options down the road in July or August for their child(ren) to make their First Holy Communion. Since the Governor extended “stay at home” until May 15th, Bishop Checchio had to cancel the May 13th celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation here at Saint Augustine. This affected many other parishes as well – so the Bishop will be looking to reschedule once we get the “go” from the Governor. I ask for your patience, understanding, and continued support during these very difficult days.

CANON OF SAINT FLORIAN BASILICA



Sister Mary Louise and I are in dialogue about Graduation and depending on what the Governor declares, what "alternatives" we can do to celebrate our 8th graders proud moment of their graduation. Unfortunately many colleges have cancelled graduation and will be sending their diplomas through the mail. Even Deacon Tom Lanza, our seminarian from the parish, along with all the seminarians were sent home several weeks ago and are continuing their studies online as well. Deacon Tom was to graduate from the seminary with a Pontifical degree this May, but he too will receive his diploma in the mail. Deacon Tom is scheduled to be ordained a priest on June 20th but we shall see what decision the Bishop will make. Unfortunately, the transitional diaconate ordination scheduled for May 9th at the Cathedral was cancelled. So these are HARD DAYS for everyone and I pray that it is the GIFT OF OUR FAITH that will continue to sustain us! Let us take comfort in the words of Jesus and Saint John Paul II - BE NOT AFRAID!

We are blessed that our Church is open from 9am – 4pm each day. It is wonderful to see the faithful come to pray before Jesus truly present in the tabernacle. Our Church is big enough that people can sit far apart respecting "social distancing." There are Purell containers on the walls in the gathering area for the faithful to use for their hands. We are BLESSED that our Church is open because unfortunately in the Archdiocese of Newark and the Dioceses of Paterson and Trenton all the Churches are locked!

I am grateful to the parents for your continued financial support of our school and because of your faithfulness to our mission our faculty and staff continue to receive their salaries – and they ARE WORKING! Unfortunately many schools have cut their teachers salaries, furloughed some of their employees, and sadly terminated staff. The Diocese of Camden just last week announced the closing of three Catholic grammar schools and two high schools. Again, we are so blessed and I am proud to be the pastor of this great school and during these challenging days we continue to be a beacon of Catholic education in the Diocese of Metuchen! The parishioners of Saint Augustine continue to amaze me through the support of their parish by dropping their offertory envelopes in the Church, at the parish center, and even through the mail.

So we will see what May 15th will hold for us when the Governor makes some hard decisions for the good of the State of New Jersey. I ask for your prayers for those who have died, especially from our parish and not being allowed to have a Funeral Mass and burial breaks my heart as a priest. Tomorrow the body of a parishioner who died will be brought to the doors of the Church where I will bless his body and say some prayers, of course "wearing a mask", and only a few members of his family are allowed to be present. Unfortunately no one can go to the cemetery for the burial because of the rules of that particular cemetery – how sad, so please pray for those who have died and their families who can't properly mourn at this time.

As I said in the beginning it's sad to walk through the halls of our school and not to see and hear your wonderful voices! YOU - each and every one of you - bring LIFE TO THIS SCHOOL AND PARISH! I miss you and know that I am praying for you, especially when I celebrate a private Mass with the Sisters. If you're able to drive by the Church just check out the parish sign and the words expresses all of our hearts. Let us continue to pray for one another and I long for the day to greet you here at our wonderful school! I hope you are able to join us for live stream family Mass on Wednesday, April 29 at 6pm. I remain,

In the Peace of Christ,
LOVE!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Father Bob". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed text.