

Pastor's letter to parishioners (April 1, 2020)

“[Those who trust in the Lord] are like a tree planted beside the water...
In the year of drought it shows no distress, but still produces fruit.” – Jeremiah 17:8

Dear Parishioners,

May the peace of Christ be with you and your loved ones!

As your pastor I want to reassure each one of you that SJA is here for you. Many may not know that the parish office and church are fully open to serve you. Please note that the church proper is open every day of the week for private prayer and devotions: M-W 8AM – 4PM; Th 8AM – 7PM; F 8AM – 12noon. The parish office, with staff, is open M-TH 9AM – 4PM and Friday from 9AM to Noon.

I myself celebrate private Mass each morning and include both the Mass intention of the day and prayers for all, in particular those of SJA. On the weekends, SJA Church is open for you especially to come in and spend a little time with Our Lord: Saturdays 4PM – 6PM and Sundays 7AM – 12noon.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation currently has extended hours to help facilitate and meet your spiritual needs: Thursday 5PM – 7PM and Saturdays 4PM – 6PM. Of course, I am always available by appointment for confession.

Please be assured that the parish staff and I are continuing to serve you throughout this crisis.

As you know, the Diocese of Richmond has suspended all public Masses until further notice. Bishop Knestout will be updating us regularly. You can check the diocesan website for these updates at <https://richmonddiocese.org/coronavirus/>.

Through all of this, St. John's will remain a community of faith that trusts in the Lord and shares His blessings with each other. We are moving forward with new ways to minister to our parish families, including:

1. **Utilizing our parish's presence on Facebook:** Please visit us at facebook.com/sjavb for the latest parish news, photos and other resources we are providing. This is also the best place to check in with each other, share prayer requests and continue to live as a community.
2. **Utilizing our parish's site on MyParish App.** If you haven't already done so, download MyParish App to your smart phone. Text APP to 88202 to download or visit the App Store. Select St. John the Apostle, Virginia Beach, after opening the app. We will keep you updated about online Masses and other up-to-the-minute parish news.
3. **Celebrating TV and online Masses:** Please watch Mass on EWTN, www.CatholicTV.org, or <http://wordonfire.org> (with Bishop Barron).

We are committed to making the most of this time to help draw families closer to Christ. In times of crisis, people look to Christ and his Church. Again, St. John the Apostle Church will be here to serve.

There are three things that I'm asking you to do right now, *today*:

1. **Pray.** Remember God does not abandon his children. Please join me in praying for the following:
 - All the sick and suffering around the world, and families affected by the coronavirus
 - Those who are struggling financially because of this crisis
 - First responders, medical personnel and all government leaders
 - Our parish, lay leaders, your pastor, bishop and the Holy Father in Rome

2. **Follow us on Facebook.** Go to facebook.com/sjavb, “Follow” us and “like” our page. You will be connected to posts and information about live Masses online and be able to interact with our community.

3. **Continue to support our parish - online.** I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the continued financial stewardship of parishioners and friends during this difficult time. With public Masses suspended, I am asking every family to move their financial support online or drop off their contribution envelopes at the office during the week or on Sundays when you come to pray.
 - a. You can find giving options online www.sjavb.org. Click on Church and then click on “Giving”.
 - b. Please consider setting up a recurring gift to help our parish for the future.

If you need assistance with online giving, please contact Marie Potter at mpotter@sjavb.org or phone 757-426-2180. Your gifts will support campus maintenance, staff salaries, and other operational expenses. God bless you for your generosity!

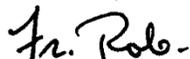
Please know in advance of my most heartfelt appreciation for any contribution that you are able to make as a sacrificial offering for your beloved church. Any amount is truly cherished and is used with the utmost scrutiny concerning best fiduciary practices under these current COVID-19 times.

As your pastor, I have already implemented some very difficult decisions concerning church personnel’s employment status and pay; this includes myself as well. Reluctantly, I have temporarily laid off and/or reduced wages for all SJA Church staff to better protect our long-term financial viability during this crisis. In addition, I have reduced all non-essential expenditures and we are deferring all maintenance not absolutely required.

I will continue to provide updates, primarily through our parish Facebook page, on our website, and via MyParish App.

Please know that you are in my prayers. Have faith! Let us rally together behind what is most important in our lives – God, family, and our St. John’s community.

In Christ,



Fr. Rob

