

BEVERLY CATHOLIC COLLABORATIVE

October 5, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As I write this letter to you, I do so with a heart full of gratitude for the blessings God has bestowed on us even in these very challenging days. As a people immersed in the mystery of the Trinity through Baptism, we have been given the forgiveness of sins, a share in the Church's mission, and the promise of eternal life in Jesus Christ. These past months, in which in so many ways we have had to "rewrite" how we live and work – including in our life as a Church – have offered us the opportunity to come to a deeper reliance on the grace of Jesus Christ. He is our hope! To the extent that we stay close to him and follow him daily, we are on the right path. For some, this has meant following the Lord on the path of the cross. Let us remember especially in our prayers those who have experienced suffering and loss in these past months.

I'm writing to update you on the life of the Beverly Collaborative. First, let me say how grateful I am for the constant support and hard work of so many. Recently, we said a fond farewell to Fr. Tim Kearney and a warm welcome to Fr. Guy Sciacca, who joins Fr. Paul Wargovich, Deacon Michael Joens, and the lay staff of the Collaborative office and ministries, our dedicated Religious Educators, as well as the teachers and staff of The Saints Academy in ministering to those entrusted to our good care. I would be remiss if I did not thank them all for their good and faithful work!

Even with all of the challenges and restrictive protocols under which we have had to live and work since March, there is good news to share about the ongoing life of our Collaborative.

- We have been able to celebrate individual Baptisms as the requests come in. In addition, we were able to celebrate the First Communion of all our second-grade children. Our Religious Education programs are presently lined up and ready to go through online learning, thanks to our DRE's and catechists.
- Our Regional Bishop recently celebrated the Confirmation of about 40 young men and women who asked to receive the Sacrament.
- Even with the present COVID restrictions in place, we have been able to celebrate some weddings for couples who didn't want to postpone until a later time. And, we have weddings in place to celebrate in the coming year for many couples who have come to us for the sacrament.
- Given restrictions imposed on us by health-care protocols, we are regularly ministering to those in need of emergency sacraments.
- Our churches are open, albeit in a limited way, for Masses and funerals. In place of a funeral inside the church, many of our bereaved families are opting for prayers led by a priest outside, at the grave of their beloved deceased. Let us keep the faithful departed and their families in our prayers.
- In June, we held individual ceremonies for each of the 8th grade graduates from The Saints Academy. This year, through the great work of Principal Kelly Fernald and her team, Saints is full to maximum allowed capacity. Catholic education continues in our Collaborative!

As you know, our roll-out of Sunday Masses has been limited and cautiously prudent. This is for the health and safety of all. Our first priority – from the beginning - has been to be able to sustain safely

what we have, without over-extending ourselves and having to pull back. Our parishioners have been great throughout – patient, understanding and supportive. We appreciate that! We have been watching the attendance – and the Masses are full – as well as the COVID numbers to make another prudent decision about the need to add more Masses.

This brings up an essential need: VOLUNTEERS to help us at ALL Masses. We need volunteers to help with seating arrangements before every Mass, and with sanitizing the church after every use. For the present, given the safety protocols under which we must operate, this is the only way we can go forward and increase the availability of our parish churches for the celebration of every Mass, Funeral and Wedding. WILL YOU HELP US? Please contact the Collaborative Office at 978-922-5542.


What does the future life of our Collaborative look like?

- A priority for me will be the establishment of a Collaborative Pastoral Advisory Committee to help by offering counsel on our pastoral mission as we move forward. As I said in my remarks at my installation as Pastor, we want to grow in our life here through evangelization – witness to Jesus – and in our life of prayer and the sacraments.
- We're establishing a volunteer position to assist with our outreach to the elderly and shut-ins.
- The 150th anniversary observance of St. Mary's and the presence of the Catholic Church in Beverly will continue. A recent celebration of the Feast of Mary, Star of the Sea was very beautiful. We're pleased that Cardinal O'Malley has accepted our invitation to reschedule the celebration of the anniversary Mass to next October 17, 2021. As opportunities develop for other anniversary observances over the next months, we'll keep you informed.
- We're actively trying to improve our online presence to meet your spiritual needs as well as to provide up-to-date information. I'm extremely grateful to all who have helped us in the regard with posting on our Facebook page and website. We're trying to increase our ability to do that effectively and well. For those who are tech-savvy, we can use your ideas!
- We'll be working to get the bulletins published again and online for your convenience.

I hope that this update gives you a good picture of what's happening in our Collaborative in these challenging days. The faith and our life of faith continues! St. James tells us that "the testing of your faith produces steadfastness." Let us ask God to bless us and our efforts to be faithfully what we're called to be.

One final, but essential note. You have been generous in your ongoing support in many ways. We also need everyone who is able to do so to be generous in their financial support of the parishes. Without the needed funding, our mission can't go forward. A report and more information along these lines will be forthcoming soon from the Collaborative Finance Councils.

Thank you for all that you do! With prayers for peace and blessing on all!



Frs. David C. Michael, Pastor

Paul Wargovich and Guy Sciacca, Parochial Vicars