

- “Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you. All things are passing away. God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices.”
- This prayer from St. Teresa of Ávila is – perhaps – a very appropriate prayer for so many of us in our parish right now. I know that many of us are struggling a great deal with the loss of the Latin Mass and the impending changes with using our altar rail for Holy Communion.
- But let’s keep things in perspective. Yes, our parish’s liturgical life is being impoverished, but there’s an opportunity here that we mustn’t lose sight of. It’s the opportunity to become more like Christ, the opportunity to grow in holiness, the opportunity to become a saint.
- As you can imagine, I’ve done a lot of thinking and praying about all this these past several weeks since the bishop released his pastoral letter. I’m not going to lie; this isn’t easy for me.
- But I’ve made a resolution to earnestly seek out God’s will and to guide our parish through this change in the manner that gives God the most glory and gives us the greatest opportunity for sanctity. And in my prayer, I’ve found both direction and peace.
- As I’ve said before, while we cannot always control our circumstances in life, we can determine how we’re going to respond. We do not have to be held hostage by our negative emotions. We can choose to remain positive and hopeful in the shadow of the cross.
- As I mentioned in December, when situations like this arise, we must: 1) pray fervently, 2) do all we can legally to remedy the situation, and then 3) wait for God to act.
- At this point I can tell you that, in addition to praying fervently, recourse has been taken to hopefully remedy this situation. So now, while continuing to pray, we must wait on God to act. And for the time being, we must presume our Lord is asking a sacrifice of us.
- As I look back over the past year, I very much believe our Lord is asking an offering, a sacrifice, of this parish. At the very least, He’s asking us to walk in faith and trust Him.
- Some of you have asked if we should just ignore the bishop’s pastoral letter, and there are liturgists and canon lawyers who opine that we would be justified in doing so. However, there are others who believe our bishop has the right to make the decisions he’s making.
- In other words, there’s not a clear consensus on this matter. That’s really the whole point of the *dubia* that were sent to Rome. Submitting *dubia* is a means provided by the Church to gain clarity when there is a question on matters such as these.
- But until the *dubia* are answered by the competent ecclesiastical authorities, it is a morally safer option and a spiritually superior option to obey and comply with authority than to presume you know better.
- In the spiritual life, it’s always better and more spiritually advantageous to be obedient than to be right. The saints show us this. For example, Padre Pio was unjustly suspended from public ministry for years. But he didn’t fight; he obeyed and waited on God.
- If our Lord is asking us to bear with this spiritual deprivation, as I believe He is, we can benefit by making an offering of it: for the reparation of sin, for the conversion of sinners, and for a greater love and belief in the Eucharist amongst all Catholics.
- As I mentioned last month, while our outward actions, like receiving Holy Communion on our knees, help inform our interior beliefs, what matters most is not the outward action itself but the interior belief.

- Regardless of whether you're physically able to kneel without the support of the altar rail, you can always kneel in your mind and heart; you can always be more intentional as you receive. But, if you're able and wish to do so, you are welcome to kneel as you receive.
- What I want for our parish is to be humble and above reproach in this situation. I don't want anyone to have cause to say that the parishioners of St. Ann's are angry and disobedient. Rather, I want this diocese to be edified by our humble example.
- Remember: humility wins every battle. If we are humble in our actions, with faith that God will do something powerful with our offering, with hope for God's will, and with charity for our bishops, God's will *will* be accomplished, and we will be all the holier for it.
- Barring some miracle, we will forego using our altar rail this coming Friday.
- You'll come forward in 2 lines, just as you do now. Those of us distributing Communion will stand on the first step in the center of the sanctuary between the altar rails.
- You'll be allowed to stand or kneel on that first step if you wish. We will try to have altar boys stationed right there to provide assistance, if necessary, to those who kneel.
- At our larger Masses, we are going to strive to have more than just two of us distribute Holy Communion, as taking away the altar rail certainly mitigates a lot of efficiency.
- If we have a 3rd or 4th person helping with Holy Communion, those people will stand near the modesty rails in front of the first row of pews. We're going to see how things, listen to your suggestions, and make tweaks as necessary.
- Some of you have asked what will happen if someone goes to the Communion rail to receive. The answer is that I will not be able to give you Holy Communion if you do. I will simply tell you that I'm no longer able to give you Holy Communion there.
- Out of respect for Christ, His Church, and me, I ask you to join me in being obedient to our Bishop, and to respect how we're trying to manage this situation.
- I'm asking you to follow my lead on this and not put me, Fr. Jones, or our deacons in the position of having to say no to you. Please don't do that.
- Pride, anger, and resentment never win the day. Humble obedience, fervent prayer, and fasting do. So we mustn't act in any way that gives free reign to our passions.
- Instead, let's follow the path of the saints who, like our Lord, preferred to suffer injustices in union with Christ rather than commit even the slightest sin.
- My brothers and sisters, a cross has been laid upon the shoulders of this parish; our Lord is asking something of us. And while foregoing the use of the altar rail may be a little painful and sad, it's also a chance for us to unite ourselves more closely with our Lord.
- There's an opportunity for us to grow in real virtue and holiness through this situation if we can remain humbly obedient, fervent in prayer, and generous in fasting and doing penance.
- "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you. All things are passing away. God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices."
- May God's holy will be done with our parish and with our liturgy.
- St. Teresa of Ávila, pray for us. St. Padre Pio, pray for us.