

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Introducing the Eucharistic celebration on March 16, 2020 at Casa Santa Marta, Pope Francis said: *"I think of families, closed up, the children not going to school, perhaps the parents cannot go out, and some will be in quarantine."* He further added, *"[this] is a beautiful opportunity to creatively rediscover true affection in the family. Let us pray for the family so that relationships within the family at this point in time may always flourish for the good. May the Lord help them to find new ways, new expressions of love and shared life in this new situation."*

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) is now part of our public and private life and together we must call on faith, hope and courage to meet this challenge. Our *faith* gives us the assurance that we are not alone in times of challenge. *Hope* is our capacity to look beyond the complex challenges of life without being overcome by them. Together they are gifts which yield *courage*, our moving forward and not letting the uncertainty of the situation paralyze us.

We nourish our faith, hope and, therefore courage, through *prayer*. Saint Ignatius of Loyola once said: *"We must work as if everything depended upon us, and pray as if everything depended upon God."* In this particular moment of our history, which is really the history of our salvation in Christ, we will do everything possible to protect the safety of our families and of others. At the same time, we experience the urgent need to unite ourselves, our families, our communities, and our world, ever more closely to the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

This union with Risen Christ is precisely what we receive in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. By them, we are endowed with the gifts and strengths needed to live as disciples of the Lord.

When you brought your children to the Church for baptism, you offered them the greatest gift of all – a share in the eternal life with God. You have thus taken the first responsibility of training your children in cultivating a relationship with God, in living according to his teaching, and in participating in the life of the Church.

The parish community has been blessed to accompany you and your children in this journey, and most recently in the immediate preparation for a fruitful reception of the sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Eucharist or Confirmation.

While it is not possible for us to continue the accompaniment in person at this time, we are fully **committed to be with you** as you strengthen the domestic church, heeding the words of Pope Francis to seek *"new ways, new expressions of love and shared life in this situation."* We will support you with pertinent information and resources on a regular basis. Above all, we want to encourage and connect with you.

We look forward to that moment when, once this pandemic has passed, we can gather again as a community of faith to witness your children's celebration of the sacraments with greatest joy and gratitude.

Relying on the grace of our Lord, we remain.

Sacramental Preparation Ministry

Holy Family Parish and St. Patrick's Church