

St. Thomas Catholic Church

4415 S. 140th Street
Tukwila, WA 98168
(206) 242-5501



July 2, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I hope this letter finds you all doing well. It is hard to believe we are already in the month of July. It probably doesn't feel at all like a normal summer given our fight against the Covid 19 pandemic. Many of us have had to cancel our summer vacation plans and the recent surge in infections is of great concern to all of us.

Along with the stress and disruption the Covid 19 virus has brought to our world, our country has witnessed many tragic events in the past several weeks that have revealed the reality of racism, injustice, and lots of people feeling much anger and frustration over the future of our country. We are are incredibly vulnerable right now. We need to turn back to God in a spirit of repentance and pray for reconciliation and healing in our land.

Recently, I recalled a beautiful Advent message some years ago from Pope Benedict XVI where reflecting upon the role of Mary in salvation history, he reminded us of an important truth. He said the following:

The city, dear brothers and sisters is all of us! Each one of us contributes with his life to its moral atmosphere, for better or for worse. The border between good and evil runs through

every heart and none of us should feel entitled to judge others. Rather, each one must feel duty bound to improve him or herself. The mass media always tends to make us feel like "spectators", as if evil concerned only others and certain things could never happen to us. Instead, we are all "actors" and, for better or for worse, our behavior has an influence on others. **(Address at the Spanish Steps in Rome - December 8, 2009)**

These words reminded me that I need to be praying for the Holy Spirit to help me be proactive and in constant discernment about God's will for my life. I also need to step back and pray for the ability to listen and try and understand where people are coming from with their concerns. I am aware that I have my own fears and biases and it is very easy for me to be defensive and eager to judge people rather than try and help them experience God's love and to try and understand them. It is so easy to be entrenched in our own ideologies thinking they are a source of safety when in fact they are rooted in fear and distrust of God and others. We must pray for the Holy Spirit to tear down these strongholds and help us usher in the Kingdom of God.

A few weeks ago while I was in the chapel praying, I really sensed the Lord telling me that there were many opportunities to bear witness to our Faith and the joy the Gospel, but that they were going unheeded because we can get easily distracted and allow a spirit of fear to govern our lives.

The Lord sent the Holy Spirit to us to lead us into all Truth and to help us overcome fear and to boldly live a life of love, freedom, and service to God and others. We must not allow the difficulties we are facing to force us back into a spirit of slavery. We can't always see the fruits of our labor and must trust that God is mysteriously at work especially in moments of adversity.

In Pope Francis' beautiful Apostolic Exhortation ***The Joy of the Gospel***, I found the following encouraging words which really helped me get a new perspective on my own struggles and challenges. The two following paragraphs breathed new life and hope into my soul:

Faith also means believing in God, believing that he truly loves us, that he is alive, that he is mysteriously capable of intervening, that he does not abandon us and that he brings good out of evil by his power and his infinite creativity. It means believing that he marches triumphantly in history with those who “are called and chosen and faithful” (Rev 17:14). Let us believe the Gospel when it tells us that the kingdom of God is already present in this world and is growing, here and there, and in different ways: like the small seed which grows into a great tree (cf. Mt 13:31–32), like the measure of leaven that makes the dough rise (cf. Mt 13:33) and like the good seed that grows amid the weeds (cf. Mt 13:24–30) and can always pleasantly surprise us. The kingdom is here, it returns, it struggles to flourish anew. Christ’s resurrection everywhere calls forth seeds of that new world; even if they are cut back, they grow again, for the resurrection is already secretly woven into the fabric of this history, for Jesus did not rise in vain. May we never remain on the sidelines of this march of living hope!

Because we do not always see these seeds growing, we need an interior certainty, a conviction that God is able to act in every situation, even amid apparent setbacks: “We have this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor 4:7). This certainty is often called “a sense of mystery”. It involves knowing with certitude that all those who entrust themselves to God in love will bear good fruit (cf. Jn 15:5). This fruitfulness is often invisible, elusive and unquantifiable. We can know quite well that our lives will be fruitful, without claiming to know how, or where, or when. We may be sure that none of our acts of love will be lost, nor any of our acts of sincere concern for others. No single act of love for God will be lost, no generous effort is meaningless, no painful endurance is wasted. All of these encircle our world like a vital force. Sometimes it seems that our work is fruitless,

but mission is not like a business transaction or investment, or even a humanitarian activity. It is not a show where we count how many people come as a result of our publicity; it is something much deeper, which escapes all measurement. It may be that the Lord uses our sacrifices to shower blessings in another part of the world which we will never visit. The Holy Spirit works as he wills, when he wills and where he wills; we entrust ourselves without pretending to see striking results. We know only that our commitment is necessary. Let us learn to rest in the tenderness of the arms of the Father amid our creative and generous commitment. Let us keep marching forward; let us give him everything, allowing him to make our efforts bear fruit in his good time.

Keeping our missionary fervor alive calls for firm trust in the Holy Spirit, for it is he who “helps us in our weakness” (Rom 8:26). But this generous trust has to be nourished, and so we need to invoke the Spirit constantly. He can heal whatever causes us to flag in the missionary endeavor. It is true that this trust in the unseen can cause us to feel disoriented: it is like being plunged into the deep and not knowing what we will find. I myself have frequently experienced this. Yet there is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail, and instead letting him enlighten, guide and direct us, leading us wherever he wills. The Holy Spirit knows well what is needed in every time and place. This is what it means to be mysteriously fruitful! **(#279-280)**

The Enemy is trying to get us to believe that everything is unrepairable and that we are helpless. This is one of his favorite tactics. Many Saints in our Church labored hard and never saw the fruits of their labor. But they trusted that they were a link in a great chain that was bringing about God’s beautiful plan of redemption. They sought to be guided by the grace of the Holy Spirit and open to their own conversion and to do the best they could to overcome evil with good. We are part of a much bigger and beautiful plan from God. May we never give into despair and discouragement but trust in God even when we don’t see the

results we want to see. May the Holy Spirit, our interior Teacher, help guide us and shield us from discouragement. He is the Lord and giver of life as we profess in our Creed.

Parish Life

We have begun celebrating public Masses following the guidelines from the State of Washington and the Archdiocese of Seattle. Our Masses have been outside but beginning on July 12 we will move inside the church. You can register on the website and also review the guidelines for participation. I am available always for Confession by appointment and Anointing of the Sick. Please call the parish offices or email me.

The parish staff is working limited hours and always available if you need anything. Please call or email your requests/needs.

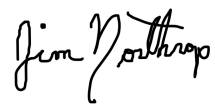
We have been having security issues and terrible incidents of graffiti to our buildings. The last incident (the worst) was done in broad daylight. Over the 4th of July weekend we have hired a security company to patrol our parking lot and we will be putting up barriers to prevent people from entering the parking lot on Saturday.

I would like to end this letter by reminding you of our FORMED parish resource. There are great programs, movies, and resources to help encourage us and the library is constantly being updated. Two particular programs that I recommend are "The Search" by Chris Stefanick and "Into the Breach" which is produced by the Knights of Columbus. Both shows are very well-produced and inspirational. If you haven't registered for FORMED there is a link on our parish website. You don't need a code anymore but just a valid email.

Tomorrow is the Feast day of St. Thomas, our patron Saint. Let's take a moment to give thanks for the faithful witness of his life, but also for all of the people who have been and are now part of our St. Thomas parish family.

It is a privilege for me to journey with you in our Faith. Rest assured of my prayers for you and thank you for your prayers for me.

in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Northrop".

Fr. James Northrop
Pastor