Dear Parishioners and Friends,

It is remarkable the similarities between the early Church and the Catholic Church of today. As Phillip preaches to the people of Samaria there are many great works being done and the people are filled with joy and are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus yet they had not received the Holy Spirit. Today many are baptized and yet they are not conformed to Christ Jesus. How often do we hear the expression, “I am Catholic but I do not practice the faith.” Or we hear people say, “I am spiritual but not religious.” Catholicism is not just another religion or set of beliefs among many others. It is a commitment to the person of Jesus Christ, His Church, all he taught and proclaims. In receiving the Holy Spirit we are transformed in our Being not just by what we do but also by who we are. Through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders our lives are marked in such a way that can never be denied or taken away. One cannot be unbaptized or unconfirmed or denied as being ordained. Yes we may renounce our faith or be laicized and not function as a priest, but we cannot deny that our soul has not been indelibly marked. This is permanent.

Jesus will be with his Disciples on earth for only a short period of time; he is soon going to ascend to His Father and our Father. He assures them and us He will never leave them or us as orphans. His commitment to be with us always has never been withdrawn. Here is where our hope resides; in the very words of Christ. St. Peter says we should always be ready to give an explanation to anyone for our hope, but to do it with gentleness and reverence. This places an obligation on us to know what Jesus and the Church teaches and to abide by these teachings. We must be constant learners as well as doers; to share and explain our Faith. We might ask ourselves what it means to call ourselves Catholic. Why do we profess that there is one God; that we believe Jesus is the Son of God; that the Church is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic? Each of us should have an answer ready at hand. This may cause us to be in disagreement with others but it should never lead us to anger or harsh words. We should never demean an individual or speak words of condemnation. We should never lose site that we are to bring others to Christ and not be an obstacle for them to know the Lord.

This time of staying at home or social distancing gives us great opportunities. This is an incredible time for prayer. Therefore I encourage you to read the scriptures daily, read the letters from Popes and Bishops, read articles from reputable Catholic publications and noted authors. At a parish I served the school librarian challenged faculty and students to read 1000 pages during the summer almost all of them succeeded. Wouldn’t it be great if we met that challenge with good Catholic materials? We as a parish created such a list which is posted on our webpage and there are many other worthwhile publications and books. God has given us this time let us use it wisely.

I would also like to welcome Louis McHale a seminarian of the Archdiocese of Washington. He will be with us throughout the year. He looks forward to meeting and serving our parish community. Louis if you would please come forward and offer a few words.

As you know, in the District of Columbia, the “Stay at home order continues until at least June 8. But we are thinking how do we prepare for when we are able to gather at Church. I need to establish a Committee that is able to develop procedures for public masses in conjunction with guidelines from the Archdiocese, our parish facility and the District of Columbia. Are you willing to help? please contact me at [mellone@annunciationdc.org](mailto:mellone@annunciationdc.org) with your availability. We will need to think about mass schedule, seating, sanitizing, communion procedures and many other issues.