

January 31, 2022

Hi everyone. I hope that you all had a good and blessed Christmas with family and friends, especially after last year's hiatus from family events due to the pandemic. Many people have lost loved ones over the past couple of years due to COVID and, of course, other reasons; know that you are in our hearts and prayers.

Mass/Other Restrictions: There are as many opinions about the necessity or foolishness, and the effectiveness, of restrictions as there are people (and believe me, we hear them all!). But we ask parishes and others to simply follow the state guidance, as it receives guidance from CDC and medical professionals. Many people dismiss the pandemic as being overblown, but when you look at statistics, New Mexico has lost at the time of this writing over 6,300 people due to COVID—more than 3,000 per year. That's equal to the population of Raton, and we're not even at the two-year mark. Some compare it to influenza deaths, but there's really no comparison; flu and pneumonia deaths usually take 200-300 per year, so COVID losses have been about 10x that. So...be careful. It's simply charity to try to ensure the safety of all.

COVID & Vaccines: There are more opinions on this than there are people, it seems at time. Many people are wary about taking the vaccine, and often cite some isolated stories about negative effects. However, the vast majority of deaths are in the unvaccinated. After all, there is no absolutely safe, 100% effective vaccine or medicine; even aspirin causes some deaths every year. With the internet, it's easy to cherry-pick stories which fit preconceptions and conspiracy theories. Yet the whole world and all governments are greatly concerned about COVID, so it's obviously not simply some nefarious plot by some certain group of people or political party.

People also wonder about its connection to abortion, which is good to investigate. However, if Pope Francis, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and most bishops have not only received the vaccine but encourage receiving it, it would seem okay for us to do so as well. After all, it's likely that when we buy gas, groceries, etc., we are more directly supporting abortion than in receiving the vaccine; the vast majority of corporations donate to entities which themselves actively donate/support abortion-providing agencies.

If you're interested in finding out more about vaccines, their development and a fairly-recent pandemic, a good book is "The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in World History" by John Barry about the Spanish flu in the early 1900s. We see results of that pandemic in almost every older cemetery's headstones—a clustering of deaths around 1916-1918. One particularly interesting fact is that each person who acquires a virus himself produces thousands of variants because of the virus' imperfect DNA replication process within our cells, but only rarely does a variant have properties to make it more virulent. COVID apparently mutates very frequently, and that's why it may be around for a while. This is also why there's a different regular flu vaccine every year—each targets the most prevalent variants. I don't know, but I wouldn't be surprised it we'll need to get a new COVID vaccine every year or so like we do with regular influenza.

Archdiocesan Bankruptcy: The bankruptcy proceedings slog on. The archdiocese and the claimants have long agreed on a settlement amount, but insurance companies still have to commit to what they will contribute, and final bankruptcy settlement depends on the total being accepted by the claimants; this is standard in these types of proceedings. Mediation continues.

People often ask about progress, but it's hard to say...or to tell. There are more twists and turns in the process than in a bowl of spaghetti, and about as many issues and possible paths forward.

The second property auction is tentatively scheduled for the January 31 – February 7; it has taken a lot of time because of the small size and number of properties, and lack of clarity in the deeds of the past. That's in the hands of the auction company; here's their [LINK](#) if you you're interested in following, or even placing a bid.

Women's Ordination: Now, many people were concerned about the well-publicized "ordination" of Ms. Anne Tropeano on October 15; it was big issue in the media, and may become an issue in the Church's current synodal process.

The Church does not accept ordination of women as valid for a number of reasons, but most especially because the Church—following the example of Jesus choosing His apostles—sees itself as authorized to ordain only men; popes (even Pope Francis) have noted that. Because of the model Jesus gave, the Church does not see itself authorized to ordain women. People often forget the fact that, as God, Jesus could have chosen anyone He wanted for priests/apostles and directed history toward that. Priestesses were not uncommon in other cultures/religions during Jesus' time, yet He chose only men. Even Pope Francis is reiterating the Church's teaching on this, revising canon law to state: "Both a person who attempts to confer a sacred order on a woman, and the woman who attempts to receive the sacred order, incur a *latae sententiae* excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See; a cleric, moreover, may be punished by dismissal from the clerical state." For a more complete review of the Church's belief, you can check out John Paul II's [Ordinatio Sacerdotalis](#), or Pope Paul VI's Inter [Insigniores](#).

This practice is by NO means a disparagement of women, who do so very much good in the Church; it is rather simply a recognition of the model of the Church set by Jesus Himself. After all, the greatest saint in the Church—Mary—is a woman, and yet even she was not given the task of priesthood. In fact, Pope John Paul II in his [Mulieris Dignitatem](#) strongly praised women and their roles in the Church. Yet, not all roles are for all persons; for instance, men are not given the incomparable gift of motherhood. So, it isn't a question of "better" or "worse," but simply different roles and vocations...different roles given by God in following Christ. We remember St. Paul: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord...To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good..." (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). After all, the beauty of orchestral harmony is not by one instrument alone, but the different instruments adding their own unique and essential contributions.

Well, that's about all the major updates for now; we'll try to keep you informed about any big developments. So...

The Lord bless you and keep you:

The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you:

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

(Numbers 6:24-26)