



SACRED HEART OF JESUS CATHOLIC PARISH

September 9, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I am writing this letter to you from Assisi where I am participating in a conference with seminarians from 17 developing countries and where I have been kept informed about the unfortunate event that took place during the 10:30 am Mass yesterday. While it is difficult for a pastor to be separated from his parish when something like this occurs, I am deeply comforted by the way in which it was handled and the immediate and direct response of the parish, especially from our men.

For about a year and a half there has been an ongoing series of meetings taking place related to security at Sacred Heart. Already a number of discrete changes have been implemented. The most recent incidents of the satanic graffiti on our doors and now this disturbance give us reason to continue and intensify this effort. We will be looking into what technological enhancements may be of help in this regard.

My immediate concern now is your well-being, especially the well-being of the children who witnessed this disturbance. Our Headmaster at the Academy is assessing the needs of our students with professionals and will proceed accordingly. Speaking with children following a traumatic event is always helpful, especially to the extent that you allow a child to ask questions and respond to those questions honestly and at their own level of understanding.

Thankfully the events of yesterday, while frightening and disturbing, were not ultimately destructive. Everyone is safe, including the young man who was at the center of it. This becomes, then, an opportunity for a deepened formation of our children to come to understand how troubled and hurt some people are and how we, as a Christian community can respond to them.

I understand that the young man who created the disruption evidently entered the church at some point to “seek sanctuary”. Those first speaking with him tell me that he appeared fearful and disoriented and then reacted erratically hence the disturbance. It is not our desire to create a difficult legal situation for this young man, and I think I know our parishioners well enough to know that we all offer our forgiveness. We simply want to be sure he receives all the help he needs. The fact that he came to Sacred Heart for sanctuary warms my heart and I want our parish to be exactly that for him and for others. This morning, here in the city of St. Francis, I offered my Mass for him and his family, as well as for the people of Sacred Heart. When the time is right, I intend to reach out to him and his family to assure them of our concern, support and love.

Let us thank God for his providential care and abundant blessings upon our parish over these past few years and let us look for ways to more fully live out our vocations to be disciples of Jesus Christ and emissaries of his Sacred Heart.

In Christ,

Fr. Robert Sirico