Outline

Greeting

Opening and purpose for letter

What’s coming up next

Personal comment/experience from the past year

Listing of things that have taken place in the past year at your parish

Transition and turning point(s) for writer

Call to action

Closing

Items highlighted yellow are suggestions of things the writer might want to include

Greetings dear friends,

As we enter into this liturgical season of “ordinary time,” I want to reach out to you about many of the things that have happened in our parish during this past *very unordinary* year.

We all know that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed our lives in so many ways. Please know that my prayers have been with you in whatever way you have been impacted. I know that so many have felt the grief of losing loved ones; adding roles as teachers and tutors to students learning from home; battling the virus personally; feeling loneliness due to the separation from friends and family – or any combination of those.

I am sure that you are much like me in that I anxiously wait for this time of loss, fear and uncertainty to be behind us and we are all able to resume life to as normal as possible. Part of that is fulling coming back to Mass regularly. I am working with parish staff, pastoral council, worship committee and others to plan and host an event/liturgy which will help us all to renew and reconnect in person as a parish community.

Other parishes throughout the Diocese of Saginaw, as well as Bishop Gruss and the chancery staff, also are working on similar initiatives. I will be sure to communicate more about our parish event as details emerge.

For me personally and among the XXX Parish staff, we have [whatever has occurred in your lives: # of friends or family who have had the virus or passed away; # of people on the staff who have had the virus; or whatever resonates with you.]

Despite all of the change and uncertainty, XXXX Parish has adapted to continue to serve our mission to: [add some words from parish mission statement] In the past year, we have:

[Suggested things to list]

* Held xxx parking lot/outdoor Masses
* Livestreamed daily and Sunday Masses on [whatever platform]
* Completed faith formation for xxx children and xxx adults (most virtually)
* Welcomed xxx into the church at Easter Vigil
* Had xxx infant baptisms
* Celebrated xxx marriages
* Had telephone outreach to all parishioners
* Continued [community neighborhood breakfasts, food pantry distributions] in amended formats
* Started {or completed} xxx project/renovation
* Continued youth fellowship groups via video conferencing
* Held prayer groups and Bible study using virtual meetings

As you know, we have been gradually and systematically returning to Mass and other activities in the manner in which they were done in the “pre-COVID” time, but this will continue to take time.

For me, it will be things that may seem small, but will be signs that we are returning to “normal” again, like: holy water at church entrances or turning back on the baptismal font.

As we continue to move through the ever-changing phases of this pandemic, I urge you to make wise choices about the health and safety of yourself, your family and others. Please get vaccinated if you are medically able. And pray for those who have the virus, healthcare professionals and other caregivers, previous patients who have long-term effects and the loved ones of those who have passed away due to COVID 19.

Please know that the parish staff and I are available for your pastoral needs. Do not hesitate to call us at the parish office. I look forward to the time, hopefully very soon, when we will all gather together in person as a parish community.

Blessings and peace,

Father A.P. Riest