

Thursday, October 20, 2022

Good morning,

I hope you're doing well as the week draws to a close. I wanted to update you on the security incident earlier this week and share how we're moving forward

So, what happened?

Long story short, we had a visitor who moved around a *lot* of things (candle followers, bells, chairs) and saw fit to light every candle in the church. After review of our security footage and an inventory of items, I am happy to be able report that **nothing was desecrated, damaged, or stolen**. Though this kind of behavior is unsettling, no harm was done beyond our candles being a little more burnt down than normal and tracking down where things had been placed. We have also identified the person who did these things and have determined that their behavior was not motivated by malice but rather an expression of mental or emotional difficulty.

Next steps

Foremost, we're re-opening the church, effective immediately. Once again, the church building will be available for private prayer during regular office hours (9 am to 4 pm), with the usual exceptions on holidays. Even over these few days of closure, many of you have expressed your desire to be able to go in and pray – come on by! In your kindness, say an extra prayer for our visitor and our community while you're here.

With regards to security, we're taking this opportunity to explore how we might more proactively monitor activity in the church. With the recent upgrades to our network, our security system is now accessible remotely – something we're hoping to leverage to allow us to check in on the building even though our offices are across campus.

A prompting for our community

It isn't lost on me that the day after I preached on not closing our hearts to being both generous and vulnerable, we were reminded that leaving our church open carries risk. This incident punctuates how this generous opportunity for prayer leaves the church we love in a position vulnerable to misuse and mistreatment.

As I said in my homily this Sunday, we must avoid choosing to close ourselves off. Having the opportunity to come and pray in a beautiful church before the Blessed Sacrament is a gift that ought to be preserved. To do so, **Saint Mark's needs your help!** Because there will be a next time for this kind of thing, a moment when someone comes to the church disturbed, unsettled, or just confused. But what if, rather than finding an empty church, even just one of us was there praying?

How might our mere presence invite a stranger to join us in prayer? Seeing someone taking the time to sit quietly before the Lord, what graces might they open themselves to receiving? Perhaps the most powerful evangelization we could offer is simply letting others see our closeness to God in our silent companionship with Him. What fruits that witness could bear in the hearts of those who come to our church!

Consider how you might make prayer in our church a part of your regular routine. A quick stop in while out running errands, a prayer trip with your family during the day, a moment's refuge during the workday, a way to decompress before returning home from work. Offering a rosary, doing some spiritual reading, or maybe just knitting while praying quietly (yes, really!), what better place than in church with the Lord to build up your relationship with Him, to present your needs and receive His care!

Thank you all for your patience as we did our due diligence with this. May we respond generously, both in prayer for our visitor & the community and in considering how we might draw closer to the Lord – perhaps quite literally, by visiting Him more often! This is a welcome reminder that Saint Mark parish is a gift to us and the Lord's Eucharistic presence an invitation to us and to all, to come and be with Him.

yours in Christ,
Father Maurer