

St. Rose of Lima Parish

805 S. Jefferson St. Hastings, MI 49058

Ph: (269) 945 4246, Fax: (269) 945 0005

E-mail ID: pastorstrose2015@gmail.com

Website: <https://strosehastings.com/>

**Rev. Fr. Stephan Philip
Pastor**

Dear Parishioners of St. Rose,

By now most of you are aware of the tragic events of Tuesday morning. At around 4:00 a.m. on July 13, 2021, a fire was discovered in our beloved church. The fire began in the back of the church near the entrance. Fortunately, a neighbor across the street noticed the flames and called 911. Several fire departments from the area, including the Hastings Fire Department, responded very quickly and managed to get the fire under control. The skill and professionalism of the responding fire fighters is to be credited with saving our church. We are very grateful to them.

Moreover, thankfully, no one was seriously hurt. With the assistance of the firefighters, I was able to retrieve the Blessed Sacrament, which is now in the convent. Thanks be to God. We also recovered the sacred vessels, the holy oils, some vestments, and some of the liturgical books.

Federal and state fire investigators have conducted a thorough investigation. They have assured us that this was not an act of arson. They advised us that there is nothing suspicious about the nature of the fire. We are awaiting word from other experts who should be able to advise us as to how this accidental fire began.

Sadly, there is significant damage to the church. We lost a few stained-glass windows, including the beautiful St. Cecilia window above the choir loft. There is also considerable smoke and water damage throughout the church. It is too early to know, but we are hopeful that there is no structural damage.

We will restore our beautiful church, and we will take this opportunity to rebuild and strengthen the bonds between us. We will come through this stronger than ever. The Bishop has assured us of his continued prayers and support. We will be working with diocesan officials and

insurance company as we move forward. After talking with insurance and restoration company personnel, we have come to know that it will likely take many months (minimum 9 months to one year) to restore the church.

In the meantime, we need to provide a space to celebrate the Eucharist as a parish family. At present, we will be using the All Purpose Room (some call it the gym) for weekend masses. The Mass schedule will remain the same: Saturday 4:30 p.m.; Sunday 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Weekday mass will be celebrated in the Adult Education (RCIA) Room. Confession will be offered as always Saturday afternoon. We will use the adult education room for confessions.

We would like to hear from you if the All Purpose Room and the Adult Education Room is preferable to the weekend and weekday masses respectively. Do you think there are any other preferable alternatives for the same? We would like to get to a common understanding of what is best for St. Rose, so that we can be together and not be divided. Please submit your comments and suggestions to Phillip_Green@miwd.uscourts.gov and to **616-901-7682**

I am asking all of us to be extra supportive of each other during this difficult time. Let's use this opportunity to reach out to those who may feel lost and isolated. Let's use this opportunity to forgive past faults and offenses. We need to pray for each other in earnest. We need to be united and not divided on personal views and opinions or interest. We need to adjust according to the interest of the whole parish of St. Rose as family. We need each other all the more now. With God's help nothing is impossible.

Fire damaged our church and it has broken our hearts. But the fire of the Holy Spirit can heal us and rebuild our church better than we can possibly imagine.

Let us be united as family of St. Rose. God Bless us. Thank you.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Stephan

July 14, 2021