29 October 2026

My Brothers and Sisters,

On Wednesday. 28 October 2026 at approximately 2:15 PM, a fire started in the basement of St. Vincent de Paul Church. We have reason to believe that this was due to a fan and dehumidifier malfunctioning, but we will not be certain until the completed Fire Marshal report becomes available. The fire was quickly extinguished by the Mount Vernon Fire Department, and no major structural damage occurred. Our school students were never in danger, and the diligent work of our School Resource Officer ensured that everyone was kept safe while the First Responders took care of us. No one was injured, and the Blessed Sacrament was quickly and reverently removed to the Office Chapel tabernacle. Direct damage from the fire was limited to the basement contents (such as Christmas decorations, boxes, and liturgical items) and minor damage to the sacristy floor and plumbing, which was directly above where the fire broke out.

Unfortunately, the burning of these items created thick, toxic smoke that traveled throughout the Church. This smoke damage is extensive and will require careful and time-consuming restoration and cleaning work to be done. Because of the high ceilings and our beautiful artwork, this will require scaffolding to be set up, and careful cleaning to take place. Unfortunately, many items must be discarded, as the cost to clean them would eclipse the cost to replace them. This includes all the carpet in the Church, many of the liturgical linens and vestments, and hymnals. We have been working with our insurance provider and the Diocese of Columbus Office of Facilities and Buildings, and they are supervising this effort. Due to the nature of this work, we may discover other issues as we clean, such as a need to repair or refinish flooring. I am confident, after speaking with the maintenance staff, that we will be able to celebrate Christmas as normal in our Church, and we will make every effort to complete this as quickly as possible while not compromising the safety of our people or the beauty and longevity of our building.

The temporary closure of our Church will require us to be flexible in our coming together to celebrate the Holy Mass and participate in our sacramental life. After speaking with Bishop Fernandes, the Diocese, and the Parish Staff, we have developed a plan to ensure we can still celebrate the Sacraments with minimal interruption. A simplified version of this schedule was already sent out, and the Parish Calendar has been updated on our website.

SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC PARISH

1. Weekend Masses
   We will temporarily move the locations of weekend Masses until our Church is reopened. The times for these celebrations will remain the same. The 4:30 Saturday anticipated Mass, the 10 AM Mass and the Noon Mass that were celebrated at St. Vincent will move the to the School Gym. The Precious Blood will not be distributed in the Gym for the sake of simplicity, and we will not have a procession of gifts. There will also have limited music, but we will make every effort to make them beautiful and dignified. The only entrance for these masses will be through the playground side doors (the MacArthur St. doors will serve as emergency exits only).
   The 8 AM Mass will temporarily move to St. Luke, so that we will not impact St. Vincent PSR, and to bring as many of our Masses into a Church as possible. St. Luke will continue to have their 5 PM anticipatory Mass and 10 AM Mass.

2. Daily Masses
   The Monday daily Mass will move to 8:30 AM and occur in the School Gym to accommodate our School students and their schedule. While the public is welcome, they must use the playground doors to enter, sign in and sit in a designated area to preserve security for our students.
   Tuesday 12:15 PM, Wednesday 8:30 AM, Friday 5:30 PM, and Saturday 8:30 AM Masses will be in the Parish Office chapel (located at 303 E High St). There is limited seating, but we will do our best to accommodate everyone. Because of the restructuring of the chapel, these Masses will be offered *ad orientem*, similar to how we have been celebrating Saturday morning Mass.
   The Mass schedule at St. Luke will not change at this time.

3. Confession
   St. Luke will continue to have confession at 4PM on Saturdays.
   St. Vincent de Paul confessions will be in the parish office, please use the front door, with the line forming in the entrance hall. These will occur at their standard times, Thursday at 7 PM and Saturday at 9AM.

4. Adoration
   Similar to the other celebrations, Adoration will shift from the Church to the Parish Office chapel at its normal times. St. Luke adoration times will not change.

5. Funerals
   All funerals will occur at St. Luke Church until St. Vincent de Paul reopens.

6. Holy Days, Special Masses, and Other Parish Events
   Please check the bulletin and parish calendar on the website, as some locations may have changed. We will make every effort to inform the community of any changes, but these resources are diligently updated and represent the best way of knowing what is happening and where.

I understand that this will represent a hardship and require our understanding and patience, and I thank you in advance for your support and prayers. I am deeply grateful to our parish staff and clergy who have been working tirelessly since this incident to keep solve problems and provide solutions. Please be assured of my love and prayers for our community and know of my dedication to completing this restoration as efficiently as possible so that we can return to having two beautiful and vibrant churches in our parish family. May God richly bless and keep you!

Your Servant in Christ,

Reverend P. J. Brandimarti, KHS
Pastor, St. John the Baptist Parish