 Office of the Rector

**St. Paul’s Co-Cathedral, Saskatoon**

March 2, 2021

The Honourable Scott Moe

226 Legislative Building

Regina, SK S4S 0B3

Dear Premier Moe,

 Grace and Peace in our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

 May I begin by thanking you for steady leadership during these months of navigating the pandemic. If there is anyone who is suffering with “COVID fatigue” it would be you. I pray for you everyday.

 I would like to give you a brief view from the religious trenches. For Catholics – as for Orthodox Christians – Sunday Eucharist and the Sacraments are as essential to our lives as the food that sustains our bodies. From this flows all the spiritual life that impels us to serve the communities in which we find ourselves. Our educational, health care, social care, charitable outreach, and advocacy services all flow from our Eucharist assemblies. We are not merely a fraternal organization that gathers for companionship – the celebration of the Eucharist is *who we are*. For the sake of the common good our Bishops have invited us to comply stringently to health regulations. This we have done to incredible effect. I think of gracious sacrifices of the couples at their weddings, the families at funerals, and my people at our holy days. They inspire me.

 The situation has now become one of spiritual starvation for my people. As this pandemic drags on an injustice has emerged: religious places are not being accorded the same respect as stores, restaurants, bars, liquor outlets … This is not me whining. This is a pastor – who knows how the worship of God heals and strengths his people – encountering the effects of minimizing the importance of spiritual health. I find myself like other *front-line* workers more and more engaged with people who are desperate and fearful. I also know how many people are *not* being identified for support and care because they cannot gather.

 Like all our Catholic churches, the Co-Cathedral parish in the very heart of Saskatoon has seen its rigorous application of safety protocols result in no infections being transmitted in our space. I simply ask that you accord the same consideration to us as to merchants. What we offer, however, is completely free: encouragement, hope, and a call to generosity.

 It is the generosity that I witness you striving to model. Let us help you even more in this.

 In Christ,

 Very Rev. Fr. Stefano Penna, Rector