

**Wednesday, June 3, 2020**

Memorial of Charles Lwanga & companions, martyrs

Dear friends,

I hope this finds you well as we prepare for the post-Easter solemnities of the Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi, with Father's day coming the week after. We are also blessed to begin a Year of the Eucharist on June 14<sup>th</sup> (Corpus Christi – the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ). You can read about that and more in Archbishop Etienne's pastoral letter [\*The Work of Redemption\*](#)<sup>1</sup>.

I am writing today to offer an update on our efforts to begin outdoor Masses at Saint Mark. As you may have read at our parish Facebook page or on my Twitter account, this is a rather grand undertaking – there are [policies, procedures, registration, and communication plans](#) that must be created, documented, and submitted to the archdiocese for approval before we can move forward.<sup>2</sup> The staff and I met the week after the governor's proclamation on May 29<sup>th</sup> to begin that process.

To cut to the chase: **we will have our first outdoor Mass on Sunday, June 28<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am.** This will give us time to fulfill the requirements placed before us, gather & train volunteers, open registration for Masses, and communicate updates.

## **Volunteer help**

At this time, our greatest need is volunteers. We need volunteers for multiple roles, including check-in of those who attend, instruction & guidance in the new safeguards, monitoring needs before, during, and after Mass, clean-up & takedown of equipment after Mass. Volunteering in this capacity is a **2-3 hour commitment per Mass** (30-60 minutes before and after each Mass – with the Mass being about an hour long). There is also a one-time mandatory online training for all volunteers.

Once outdoor Masses begin, we will have them rain or shine. **If you are interested in volunteering, please notify Veronica Olson at your earliest convenience.**

Though volunteers in the vulnerable category will not be turned away, **I am urging all those who are 65+ or who have compromised health to continue to stay home.** After all that we have sacrificed together, it would be devastating to have our

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<sup>1</sup> *The Work of Redemption*, Archbishop Etienne - <https://www.archbishopetienne.com/pastoral-letters/the-work-of-redemption>

<sup>2</sup> *Plan for Limited Reopening of Masses in Washington State*, Washington State Catholic Conference - <http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/Assets/General/WSCC-Reopening-Guidelines-052820.pdf>

celebration of the Mass be a flashpoint of illness. While no one will be turned away from volunteering or Mass on the basis of vulnerability – it is important for all of us to use careful discernment in choosing whether to come to Mass, volunteer, or continue to stay home.

## **Registration & selection for attending outdoor Masses**

For anyone who desires to come to Mass, registration is going to be required. What this means is calling into the parish office – at the designated voicemail box – and leaving your name, the number of people who would come with you (spouse, children, others in your household), and your contact information.

The Thursday & Friday before a Sunday Mass, we will begin contacting the 100 people who are randomly chosen to come to Mass. On that Sunday, your attendance will be recorded – alongside whatever contact information you choose to share for contact tracing (an optional, but important tool in the case of a reported case). Once you have come to a Mass, your names will be taken out of the pool until all others who register have had an opportunity to come to Mass. We will have more details about the process in the coming days – please bear with us as we sort this out.

To be clear: **we are not taking registration at this time**. Please do not call us yet! We will notify the entire parish – by e-mail and physical letter – when we are ready.

## **Outdoor Masses: the same but different**

On one hand, like the Mass! I am blessed to have a portable altar – [I shared the details of it at the May 9<sup>th</sup> Saturday live Q&A](#) – along with a travel Mass kit and lightweight vestments. The liturgy will continue to be a dignified and worthy offering.

At the same time, it will be different. As the WSCC document I referenced earlier indicates, there are a great number of restrictions we must observe in order to safeguard the health and wellbeing of everyone present. Careful cleaning of shared facilities, social distancing, masks worn by all attending, no singing, a simplified Mass, and communion after rather than during the Mass are among the highlights. We're working on a sound solution, but we may be without any amplification for a while. And all who come will need to bring their own chairs.

And yet – we will be able to offer the Mass together for the first time in a long while! We have countless examples of Catholics celebrating Mass in humble circumstances. From soldiers kneeling around a priest in prayer on the hood of a Jeep to Catholics huddled around a stump in the woods to escape the eyes of persecutors – we have plenty of saints who have suffered more and done so well. We can do this!

## Moving forward together in prayer

With just under 1000 registered families at Saint Mark parish, the vast majority of us will not be able to volunteer or attend any given Sunday. Some will rightly discern that they need to stay home even given these new opportunities. **The biggest gift you can offer – even now – is your prayers.** The Lord has seen fit to give us this time of forced free time: don't waste it! Consider taking up the [Liturgy of the Hours](#) – there are free & low-cost apps to guide you through this amazing daily prayer that is meant for every Catholic.<sup>3</sup> The [rosary is a simple but powerful devotion](#) that the Church also gives to us.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, we are exploring the possibility of soliciting help in gathering homemade masks. **If you are willing to make masks, please contact Veronica at the office.**

Clearly things are and continue to be different than when we began 2020. Nonetheless, we move forward as the Body of Christ. Let us entrust ourselves to Jesus all the more fully and consciously – in prayer for each other and for the world. As we have seen from the last weeks, the proclamation of the Gospel is still necessary even today. We continue to minister to each other, to our local community, and to society at large.

Be assured of my prayers for you every day, especially in the celebration of Mass. I look forward to offering Masses with you in person soon.

Yours in Christ,

Father Jacob Maurer

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<sup>3</sup> iBreviary, <http://www.ibreviary.com/m2/breviario.php?b=1&lang=en>

<sup>4</sup> *How to Pray the Rosary*, USCCB, <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/rosaries/how-to-pray-the-rosary.cfm>