

November 18, 2020

Dear friends,

I hope this finds you well as we once again enter into a state-wide effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. I am writing today to share with you some updates and offer encouragement as we begin this four-week period of sacrificial offering.

How much is changing at Saint Mark parish? (Some good news for churches!)

For those of you who subscribe to the archdiocesan chancery to parish mailing (if interested, [click here to see the archive of those message and to subscribe](#)), you may note that the new restrictions instituted by the governor¹ in large part **do not change our current liturgical celebrations**. We will continue to offer daily Masses, open the church for prayer, celebrate weekly confessions, and offer Sunday Masses as we have since we started indoors in October. Though more modest in size, we continue to be able to celebrate weddings and funerals. All public liturgies will also continue to be live streamed on Facebook, with recordings made available for viewing afterwards.

With the governor's proclamation, there are a few parts of our parish life that **will** be changing:

- our parish office will be closed to visitors and staff will be working remotely except where on-site tasks require in-person presence
- our on-site classes (currently the new *Faith Matters* series & Confirmation preparation) will move to remote offerings (details to be sent out early next week)
- music will be limited to one instrumentalist and one vocalist (the latter will be explored in the coming week or so)

Please rest assured that though you will not be able to come to the office, we will be diligently working even from afar. Both myself and the staff will continue to be available via phone & email. In cases of urgent need, I will also be personally available. Happily, our technology upgrades over the past several months have put us in an excellent position carry on the work of parish ministry.

Our precautionary efforts are working – our parishes are an example of success

In his letter to parish leadership Monday night, Bishop Mueggenborg shared that the archdiocesan coronavirus taskforce met with Governor Inslee's office to highlight that across our 165 parishes – celebrating more than 20,000 Masses since the beginning of the pandemic, **we have not had a single reported case of coronavirus spreading at Mass**. We have proven that we can safely come to church in worship of the Lord and prayer as a community.

I would add that at Saint Mark parish we have done a particularly admirable job in both observing precautionary measures and helping out in the extra work that is involved. At any given Mass, I've

¹ Washington Governor Jay Inslee, COVID-19 Guidance, November 15, 2020

<https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/proclamations/COVID%2019%20November%20Statewide%20Restrictions.pdf>



been encouraged and edified by how attentive you all have been to proper hygiene, face masks, and the many people who stick around afterwards to help clean the various touch surfaces. Thank you!

‘COVID fatigue’ and the next four weeks of state-wide restrictions

At the start of this letter I called this period a time of sacrificial offering. We often associate this language with appeals for financial support for the parish, donating to our Saint Vincent de Paul conference, and gathering gifts for the various groups & facilities in our area through the Giving Tree program.

While those things are still needed – particularly for those who are struggling with poverty & homelessness – that is not all that I mean here. For the next four weeks, we are entering into a time of personal sacrifice that goes far beyond money, important though that is. We are sacrificing gatherings with family & friends, holiday traditions (particularly at Thanksgiving next week), with many facing uncertainty & anxiety about their own financial future. We are being asked to offer up our own sense of control, trusting that Jesus will care for us.

And this is the reminder that I hope to offer here: **Jesus cares for you.** If there is one place where Jesus desires to unite Himself to us, it is in our times of suffering. We see this in His sharing in the sorrow of the death of Lazarus, in His weeping at the waywardness of Jerusalem, and we see it especially in His willingness to unite Himself even to the point of death. There is no place, time, or experience that Jesus is not willing to unite Himself to us, if we but give Him the opportunity.

A time to invite Jesus to comfort, heal, and strengthen us

The first way to do so is in caring for ourselves. If you, your spouse, your children, or anyone you know is experiencing fatigue, burn-out, or depression, know that these struggles are not a sign of failure or weakness – they are the very thing that inspired Jesus to unite Himself to our humanity! Please do not hesitate to reach out to those around you, to me or a trusted priest, to a counselor or therapist, to ask for help – and to encourage others to do so. ‘*Nemo dat quod non habet*’ the Latin saying goes – ‘you can’t give what you don’t have’ – and that’s okay. As the Body of Christ we support each other and we call on Jesus to support us all.

I also want to encourage you to give special attention to your spiritual lives. Chosen or not, these four weeks may be an opportunity to newly invite Jesus into our lives – family prayer, returning to old practice, trying out new ones, reaching out to those who are alone or isolated, perhaps even connecting between households to pray together and form faith sharing groups. Who knows how Jesus might use this time to bring healing, peace, and even unexpected joys!

I pray for you daily. Let us pray for each other, for those most affected by this virus – particularly those who have died – and for the world: *Jesus, I trust in You.*

Yours in Christ,

Father Maurer
Pastor, Saint Mark parish