

January 29, 2021

Dear friends,

I hope this finds you well as we close out the first month of the new year. I am writing you today to share the latest of goings-on at Saint Mark parish. The most important update has to do with Masses – as of last week we are permitted to have up to 200 people at indoor gatherings! Moreover, we have added a Saturday vigil Mass to our weekend schedule. Mass is offered at 5:00 pm on Saturdays alongside the 8:30 am and 10:30 am Masses on Sunday.

I would like to take this opportunity to renew the invitation to come to Mass. Although the archbishop's dispensation is still in effect (in other words, it is **not** a mortal sin to miss Sunday Mass), how good it is to honor the Lord on His day! With the additional capacity allowance and vigil Mass, we have plenty of space for you and your family.

A time to grow in faith

On a similar note, we have resumed in-person gatherings for Confirmation classes and our new 'Faith Matters' sessions. This new program is on Wednesday evenings immediately after Mass. Each Wednesday Deacon Kirk, myself, or various parishioners present on topics of the faith. If you visit our parish calendar online (www.saintmarkshoreline.org/calendar), you can see the upcoming topics – perhaps there is something there that might catch your eye!

By the way, if you are into technology, please note that you can subscribe (via iCal link) to any of our calendars to add them to your phone and computer. We also have an RSS feed for our parish website to which you can subscribe to receive notifications for bulletins, announcements, and other posts to the parish website.

As you have heard at Mass, we are preparing to renew and restart our altar server program. We are preparing an orientation meeting on February 11 for those who might be interested and their parents. Please contact the parish office for details.

Please also remember that the parish is open for prayer weekdays from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Although we are not exposing the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance, Jesus is nonetheless present in the tabernacle! Consider coming to make a holy hour, pray the rosary, or simply stop by the church for a few moments of quiet prayer. I can guarantee that it will be time well-spent.

Looking towards Lent

In just two and a half weeks we will celebrate Ash Wednesday (I know – I can't believe it either). We will be celebrating Masses that day and offering ashes to all who come. In observance of pandemic safeguards, we will be taking advantage of the option to sprinkle ashes on the head of recipients rather than placing them on the forehead. Nonetheless, all who so desire will be able to receive ashes as we start Lent.

More immediately, we will be celebrating the memorial of Saint Blaise. With all that has gone before, I think we all could use the blessing invoked in his name! Although we will not be placing candles on individuals' throats, I will be offering the blessing of Saint Blaise over anyone who comes to Mass that Wednesday evening.

I would also like to share with you an opportunity for a special blessing that is easily overlooked: the blessing of candles on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord (February 2nd). As Christ is the light of the world, the tradition sprang up that church candles – which light our liturgies as well as our homes – are blessed on this day. Although we will not have Mass on this day, I would like to invite you to bring your candles to whatever Mass you attend – perhaps this weekend or at one of the daily Masses over the week. I will have holy water and the book of blessings after all Masses to bless your candles for the entirety of this coming weekend and the week of this feast.

Supporting our school

Finally (whew!), I would like to draw your attention to a new campaign on behalf of our school. Since we cannot gather for our normal fundraisers, our principal and the folks on the school commission came up with a way for us to support the ongoing work of Saint Mark Classical School. Called the “Annual Lion's Drive 300 X \$500 Campaign”, the goal is to raise \$150,000 to meet our fundraising needs. You can read more about it at the school website (www.stmss.org). Donations can be made online (<https://www.osvonlinegiving.com/149/DirectDonate/2105>).

As always, be assured of my prayers for you. May God bless all of us as we continue forward in faith.

Yours in Christ,
Father Jacob Maurer