

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Parish Family,

Trying, Confusing, and Worrisome Times:

I offer my prayers and words of encouragement in these difficult times. I want to continue to remind everyone that it is not a pious platitude to remember that we are a people of faith. Bishop Jugis the chief shepherd of our Diocese of Charlotte reminds us

"Since Apostolic times, the faithful have gathered with their clergy on Sunday to offer together the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Intrinsic to this great celebration is the petition that God protect humanity and spare us from all evil. During times of famine, war, and sickness, as in ages past, our churches should remain open so that the faithful can pray, receive the sacraments, and implore God's healing graces. Pastors of souls should receive the faithful who come on Sunday along with their anxieties, and they should preach the Gospel in a way that calms their fears and comforts them in their distress." (*Most Rev. Peter J. Jugis, JCD*)

Thus the opportunity to pray more as a parish family for all who are affected. Through prayer we commune with God who dwells in us through the Holy Spirit in Christ. We then become God's undeniable presence in the world of darkness and confusion, that we may offer clarity in the light of Truth. It is only this Truth then in Jesus Christ that is the sure source of our hope. We must remember so that we can remind others of the hope beyond the uncertainty of this world. This is our Christian way of life and our duty toward our brothers and sisters who need Jesus and Jesus dwelling in us.

Donuts and Dogma

Donuts and Dogma is now just Dogma for all those who would still like to join us for our discussions of faith. We will be abstaining from refreshments for the remainder of Lent to help reduce opportunities for communication of germs. This Sunday we will discuss Lent: Asceticism, Detachment and the Interior Life. Next Sunday we will discuss the Spiritual Practice of *Memento Mori*: Remember Death, how it can lead to greater peace and happiness in life and how it is extremely timely in our current circumstances.

Stay Informed:

In these days there is much information and almost too much to keep up with as it continues to change. As it pertains to St. Mary's our main source for official notices and changes will come via our Website at www.stmarymotherofgod.com and our St. Mary's facebook page at www.facebook.com/stmarysylva other forms of mass media communication through instant message or email on a sign-up basis will be coming.

Sanitation and Practices for Mass and outside of Mass

From the Bishop:

- The obligation of the faithful to attend Sunday Mass is waived until further notice.
- The faithful are to follow the guidance of public health professionals and should refrain from attending Mass or any public space if they have been at risk of exposure or experiencing symptoms of sickness. We ask that the faithful exercise caution with due regard for themselves and their neighbor's health and well-being.
- For now, priests are to continue offering public Masses for the well-being of all the faithful.

From the Pastor

-Sanitation

- Please continue to wash hands frequently and use alcohol based hand sanitizers. Please extend a warm and welcoming greeting, but please refrain from shaking hands before or after Mass. We will continue to forgo the sign of peace at Mass.
- The Holy Water has been removed from the fonts for the duration of Lent. However, there will still be Holy Water available via the Stainless Steel Holy Water reservoir at the back of the church for use of filling personal Holy Water bottles for use.
- For the duration of Lent we will not be having snacks or coffee after Mass.
- We are sanitizing the Church before and after all major gatherings by disinfecting the pews with spray disinfectant. We are also sanitizing and cleaning all high contact surfaces in the church and gathering spaces.

From the Pastor's Desk

-Mass

- Anyone who as a matter of conscience for deems the risk of exposure to serious are not obliged to attend Sunday Mass as a matter of obligation especially if they are elderly, themselves have a compromised immune system, have small children, or care for anyone in these particular at risk demographics.
- The hymnals and missals have been removed and sanitized and will be replaced after Lent during the Easter season or when it is deemed safe to do so. Until then it is encouraged that the faithful use online resources through the www.usccb.org or other websites and applications such as Ibreviary for the Sunday Mass readings either on their phones or computers preferably before Mass as a way to prayerfully prepare for Mass.
- Regarding the manner of reception of Holy Communion, as the moderator of the liturgy for the whole diocese, the Bishop takes seriously his responsibility to protect the rights and obligations of the clergy and the laity alike. The manner of receiving Holy Communion is the prerogative of the communicant. Therefore, the options for the faithful during the Rite of Holy Communion are:
 - 1. Receive in the hand
 - 2. Receive on the tongue
 - 3. Elect to make a spiritual communion, (not receive at all)It is the responsibility of the faithful to prudently decide in accord with reason and piety which option is best. When distributing Holy Communion, contact with the communicant should be avoided in a reverent manner.
- We will continue to distribute Holy Communion under the Species of the Consecrated Host only. If anyone has a gluten intolerance or celiacs disease please let us know as we have celiacs compliant low gluten hosts available.
- At the request of the Bishop all Wednesday evening daily Masses will be offered as a votive Masses For the Sick from Masses for Various Needs. In place of our Parish Prayer for Discipleship we will be Praying Communally the widely known Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel composed by Pope Leo XIII.

Events

- Non-essential activities involving more than 100 individuals are to be cancelled or postponed. For activities involving less than 100 individuals, consideration should be given to cancelling or postponing or using technology to hold virtual meetings. The latter may be a good option for the final stages of RCIA.
- The Bishop has encouraged that we still continue to have Daily Mass and Scheduled times of Adoration. In place of penance services to have added times of confession.
- In response to the above directive from the Bishop, we will still have all Masses Weekday and Weekend, Children's Faith Formation on Wednesday evenings, and Friday Stations of the Cross with added time of Adoration from 5:30pm-7pm and Confession before stations from 5:30-6:30pm.
- We will still be having our St. Joseph Mass and procession at 6:30pm on Thursday March 19th, but the St. Joseph's Table and Potluck has been postponed until Friday May 1st for St. Joseph the Worker.
- Our Penance Service on Thursday March 26th is Cancelled and I am adding additional confession times to the weekly schedule and draw peoples' attentions to the normal confession schedule on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. I strongly encourage everyone to make use of these times.
- Please stay tuned to our website and facebook pages for official announcements and schedule changes. We are working on implementing the use of a comprehensive messaging service such as Flock Note to actively send out messages and updates to those who sign up via text message and e-mail. We thank you for all of your cooperation during this time and encourage all to join us in prayer.

Sincerely in Christ Jesus through Mary,

Fr. Casey Coleman, Pastor