

March 17, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

It is with great sadness and disappointment that I received the news today concerning the suspension of all Public Masses and scheduled Confession times throughout the diocese. The majority of my sadness comes from the fact that in times such as these, especially when we are faced with very real danger to our physical well-being, our first priority ought to be to prepare our souls for whatever may come. With the suspension of public Masses and scheduled Confession times, such preparation has been made exponentially more difficult for the faithful. Furthermore, those for whom this pandemic may serve as a moment of conversion or reversion to the Church are now faced with barriers to their re-entry into the life of Grace.

Perhaps Our Lord will use this as a time to help us reset our priorities and deepen our understanding of the Mass and the Sacraments. We can easily get caught up in certain details that are non-essential or inconsequential to the efficacious quality of the Mass and the Sacraments. Whether or not we can shake hands during Mass, whether or not we can drink from the chalice, whether or not we can understand the words the priest is saying, all of these things in no way diminish the effectiveness of the Sacrifice being offered. That is the reality we must focus on, even now if we are unable to be present for the celebration of the sacraments. I want to reassure everyone that scheduled Mass intentions will be honored. I will continue to offer private Masses for those intentions. I will do so at the same time I would normally offer our public Masses, thus allowing you at home to spend that time in prayer, uniting yourself remotely to the Sacrifice being offered here.

I urge you to not be afraid to contact me here at the parish for any spiritual or sacramental needs that you have, including the sacraments of Confession and Anointing of the Sick. We will continue to retain our parish office hours, however, as a safety precaution, we recommend and ask that if at all possible, you contact us to conduct business via the telephone or email. The Parish Office phone number is 574-842-3667. This is the best number at which to contact me during the day. In the evenings, you can call the Rectory at 574-842-2522. I can also be emailed at bmeininger@stmaryculver.org.

Most importantly of all, I urge you to continue your prayers for God's Mercy in these troubling times. The most important thing that we need to realize is the absolutely urgent need to repent of our sins and turn back to the Lord in all aspects of our life. While public liturgical celebrations are suspended, St. Mary's Church will not be locking her doors to her faithful. You are always welcome to come and pray. In fact, I strongly encourage this practice. If you do come to the church to pray, please be sure to remain cautious and keep a safe distance between yourself and others. Avoid touching surfaces such as door handles and pew backs. It would not be an absurd precaution to wear protective gloves and wash your hands frequently and thoroughly. Nevertheless, know that St. Mary's is your home and you are welcome here.

May we offer to Almighty God, sacrifices of truly contrite hearts, that seeing our desire to return wholly to Him, He may shower us with His Mercy and preserve us from the assaults of the Enemy.

In Paternal Love,



Fr. Bill Meininger, *Pastor*