



# Pastor's Message

April 30, 2020

Yesterday, the focus of my MESSAGE was concerning what may be experienced at our parish when we return to Sunday mass, after the ecclesiastical and civic leaders issued their directives for larger social gatherings. As of now, nobody knows for certain what will occur.

Today, we pause to reflect on the present situation of participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Additionally, I will offer merely speculative thoughts in regard to our celebration of it in our parish church, for the immediate future. Moreover, I presume you will have some considerations of your own concerning both, after reading this penning. Nevertheless, whatever thoughts and feelings we have about this matter, the directive we receive, we shall do.

In terms of the present situation concerning our participation in the said sacrament, the most recent and one of utmost importance for our reflection, is the “*Note from the Apostolic Penitentiary*,” dated March 20, 2020. It is one page. Please read the below link: <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/03/20/200320c.html>

Clearly, the *Note* provides the needed guidelines for the universal Church concerning our participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

How will we be able to apply what is penned in the *Note* in our specific setting of St. James Church, subsequent to the doors being permitted to be open for public worship? I am sure we'll receive some exceptional guidance from our diocesan officials. Although, we'll also need to consider the following:

-After such a long period of time when no opportunity for individual confessions could happen in our parish church due to the pandemic, while keeping in mind much of that long period was during Lent and Holy Week when parishioners would make an effort to do so, would one opportunity for the celebration of General Absolution, with the bishop's permission, be a possibility? Would it be feasible to do so with another local parish?

- Inside of our parish church, what location can we celebrate the sacrament now? Due to the need for continued social distancing in the immediate future, will our Reconciliation

Room be reasonable location? Is that the safest place in our parish church, soon after the doors are permitted to be opened?

- If the said Room is deemed impractical, will the pews be used for private confessions? Then, does that eliminate the option for the penitent to remain anonymous during the celebration of the sacrament? Or, do we need to create another space for a post-pandemic, safe “Reconciliation Room?”

-With the summer months on the horizon, would having a priest available outside, whereby the penitent could remain anonymous while maintaining safe social distance, without compromising the secrecy of the confession, be an option? Or, is it even conceivable to do so as our parish campus as configured?

We hope and pray for the Holy Spirit to direct us to do what is correct, as God wills.

Fr. Marc