



March 17, 2020

Feast of Saint Patrick of Ireland

Dear Sisters and Brothers of Saint Mary Parish,

We currently face increasingly significant health safety challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. Various precautions are being undertaken in our state and the larger world, in our local communities, at home, in places of commerce and in our workplaces. Some precautions are necessary also for our usual religious practices. Such extraordinary measures do not cure COVID-19, but are intended to curb the spread and reduce the risk of contracting disease.

All of us in our personal and family lives must take special precautions and pray for patience to adapt to strange alterations to routines and habits. In your daily prayer remember the weak whose lives are especially vulnerable, for the healthcare workers who place their lives at risk to serve others, for our leaders and health professionals who provide direction and for researchers who work for inoculation and cure.

As evaluations by public health experts proceed, additional precautions become apparent. To the extent we can, these measures are most effective when implemented **ahead** of the local appearance of COVID-19.

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Bishop Brennan in coordination with the other bishops of the Catholic Conference of Ohio and in consultation with the Ohio governor and public health officials recently decided **effective immediately**:

*“to suspend temporarily all publically celebrated Masses/liturgies, at least through the celebrations of Holy week and Easter.”*

Further:

*“the Bishops of Ohio dispense the Catholic faithful ... from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass through Easter Sunday.”*

To summarize certain practices now in effect for Saint Mary Parish:

➤ Holy Mass, Catholic Devotion and Pastoral Care

- Until further notice no public Masses will be celebrated *at least through the celebrations of Holy Week and Easter.*
- Sunday remains a Holy Day and the bishops encourage the faithful to pray using rich resources of our faith (Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Divine Mercy Chaplet, etc.)
- Also, several TV, radio or Internet resources are available:
  - St. Gabriel Radio (AM 820) (<http://www.stgabrielradio.com> on the web) broadcasts Mass from St. Joseph's Cathedral at 10:30AM Sunday morning.
  - EWTN broadcasts the daily Mass live at 8am Eastern. Watch live on TV or by streaming online (<http://www.ewtn.com/tv/watch-live>)
  - Listen to the Mass live on SIRIUS/XM radio or listen online at (<http://www.ewtn.com/radio/listen-live>)
- Throughout the period when public Masses are suspended, I shall offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at our Altar privately on weekdays and Sundays. The Saints and Mass Intentions for each day will be honored.
- Holy Week and Easter liturgies are suspended. This brings special sadness.
- I will respond to your pastoral care needs. Call me at 740-503-2827.

➤ Offerings

- Obviously, there will be no Mass offertory collections during his period. I ask you to send your offerings by check (no cash) to the Parish Office, "Attn: Push Baum". For convenience you may wish to combine weekly offerings into fewer, larger checks. Remember, even though there are no Masses or activities, parish bills still must be paid! Thank you for your faithful stewardship.
- **Beware** of Internet or other "services" that offer to pass your offerings to your parish ... frequent **scam!**

➤ Church Activities

- The Bishop also directs that *all in-person activities in parishes must be cancelled or postponed.*
- Parish School of Religion (PSR) is suspended at least through Sunday, March 29. Teachers have prepared at-home packets for the students.
- The Confirmation Retreat at the Damascus Center (March 20-22) is cancelled.
- The Lenten Friday Simple Suppers and Stations of the Cross are cancelled.
- The *Building on Your Faith* movie program is suspended.
- Until further notice any group that usually would use church facilities may **not** gather on church property (ARS, Craft Club, Men's Group, etc.)

Thank you for your understanding cooperation with the directions and procedures affecting our parish and diocesan life. These are necessary, and we hope sufficient, measures taken across our church and society in the face of the Coronavirus pandemic. There is great inconvenience, to be sure. We miss normal Eucharistic worship, especially in this high holy season. However, there are also opportunities to draw closer to one another spiritually by our concern and prayer.

In this time of fear and caution, let us commend ourselves to the loving protection of our Blessed Mother and pray:

*Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us and after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.*

*Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.*

*That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Your loving Pastor in Christ with Mary,

*Father John*