

November 19, 2020

My fellow parishioners,

I am writing this letter to greet you and also to inform you of the ongoing updates in our parish life here at OLS.

First, you all know that as from the 18th of November 2020, the Governor has laid out new restrictions to help curb the spread of Coronavirus and that includes limiting religious gatherings to 25 people no matter the capacity of the Church building.

These are difficult times for us and in as much as we agree that we need to help lower the spread of this terrible Virus, we also know that the Church is doing so much to not only support people suffering spiritually and economically as a result of this pandemic, but we are also following very strictly the protocols laid out by the CDC to help mitigate the spread of this virus. In as much as the society makes it easier for citizens to get physical nourishment and aesthetical gratification, we must also allow and provide for their spiritual nourishment and all this is essential to the well-being of a human person.

In line with the above, I concur with Archbishop Sample on this limitation and I paraphrase him, "I am speaking out publicly to express my great disappointment and frustration at the Governor's latest restrictions on faith communities in Oregon. I understand the need to address the spike in COVID-19 cases, but we know that spread of the virus is not happening at faith gatherings. Our churches have been carefully following the masking, distancing, and sanitizing protocols. They work. Why are we limited to 25 people in a church that can seat 1000 while certain businesses are allowed to operate on a percentage of capacity?"(Archbishop Sample, www.archdpdx.org).

Let us keep praying for the end of this pandemic and especially for all who may lose their jobs during this holiday season.

With respect to these current restrictions, we have decided to make temporary changes in mass times to give more opportunities for people to come to mass safely especially during solemn season of Advent. As from next Sunday, first Sunday of Advent, we will have **Saturday Vigil mass at 5pm (regular), Sunday masses will be at 8.30am, 10.30am and 12.30pm.** This schedule will remain in effect till the 24th of December 2020.

We have also added extra masses for **Christmas.** **On the 24th, we will have three masses: 4pm, 7pm and 8.30pm. On the 25th we will have three masses: 8.30am, 11am and 1pm.** I humbly encourage you to sign up early for these Christmas masses to help us plan ahead. The sign up will be open as from the 28th of November (1st Sunday of Advent).

On a separate note, you will be receiving a Christmas letter from me this week. We also have some Christmas gifts for you that you may pick from the Church or the office. We have purchased Magnificat books for you to use during Advent. I strongly believe that *our help will come from the Lord* (Psalm 121). Despite the sufferings of this time, let us get down on our knees and plead for God's mercy. Let us seek strength in prayer and worship. Let us keep our hope and our faith strong!

My dear brothers and sisters, thank you. I extend my greetings and blessings to you and your loved ones. Happy Thanksgiving! May God bless and protect you. Amen

Fr. Chrispine