



## Parish Update... 031920

These are very challenging days, because our day-to-day routine is changing... sometimes every day. We must face the reality that for at least a few weeks, we are going to need to be extremely flexible and fully supportive of each other.

As pastor, I am responsible for pastoral care of the community committed to me under the authority of the diocesan bishop in whose ministry of Christ I have been called to share. I therefore carry out the functions of teaching, sanctifying, and governing with the cooperation of other presbyters or deacons and with the assistance of lay members of the Christian faithful. (Taken from Canon Law).

I remind all of us of this not to demonstrate my authority, but to emphasize my expectations for each of you. I readily admit that, in my own weaknesses, I sometimes fall short and make mistakes in "teaching, sanctifying, and governing," So I rely on you and your constructive counsel to assist me in my responsibilities. I am accountable to God, to His Church, and to the successors of Christ's Apostles, the bishops. And while I am, in a certain sense, also accountable to you and the people of the parish, there are times that I must give clear direction and ask that it be followed.

During this time of uncertainty, I must look to the direction of the bishop, to whom I freely promised obedience. Of course, I keep an eye on directives and suggestions from the executive authority of our state, our nation, and the CDC. When both legally and morally obliged to do so, I follow the rules and regulations of those who hold such authority.

Given all of this, I want to make sure that we all understand that we will adhere to the directives we have been given. Therefore, it is not an "automatic" that one person's situation or concerns override what we have been told to do. I fear that sometimes we can fall into the trap of saying "well, that doesn't mean me." Even worse, that any of us would dare to say "it won't happen to me/us, so let's do things the way I/we want."

So, knowing that the current health crisis may change things moment by moment.

There are two documents that we are attaching. A letter to the faithful from Bishop Bradley, as well as directives and guidelines given to the pastors from the Bishop. Please note that the bishop has noted to me that pastoral judgement can be applied according to our specific circumstances.

I emphasize the following directives and plans taken from the directives of the bishop, and also plans for the parish during this time. (I have attached the official directives from the diocese, but what follows are items that are of particular importance to our parish and apply to many if not all).

1. **All scheduled, public masses are suspended from Friday, March 20, 2020 through April 5, 2020.** Please note that there could be an extension of time to this.
  - a. Notice that this directive comes from Bishop Bradley and it is not a decision made by me and I fully support it. Any public Mass is prohibited. Of course, this also means that everyone is dispensed from the Sunday obligation.
  - b. Notice also that this directive includes no celebration of public Mass on Palm Sunday.
  - c. Your priests will continue to celebrate Mass, although privately. Mass intentions that have been scheduled during this time will still be the intention of one of our priests.



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- d. There will be opportunity to participate in Mass in a Diocesan live-stream. Parishioners are encouraged to participate in this, or by participating in the Mass by other means (television, online, etc.). Resources are provided below in the attachment.
  - e. We are examining the possibility of livestreaming and/or recording a Sunday Mass from our parish church. Regardless, I will be recording a Sunday homily and will be on the parish website on Monday. **This weekend, I will reflect on what we are all experiencing, and I will also address the “why” behind suspending Holy Mass at this time, which I know is so difficult for many. That will be provided in writing as well on Monday.**
2. We want to be sure that we are still offering adoration and confessions. So, after consulting with Fr. Rob and Fr. Raj, we are going to try this:
- a. The adoration chapel remains open, but there is no exposition of the Blessed Sacrament at this time. Please note that because of the small space, we ask that no more than 3-4 people be in the chapel at one time. We are going to try doing this without scheduling it.
  - b. This coming Wednesday, March 25, we will hold exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the church and provide the Sacrament of Reconciliation from 6:30 PM until 8:30 PM. Unfortunately, we should avoid having any more than 10 people in the church at one time. We will mark the pews where we ask people to sit, so that we can practice the recommended “social distancing.” I recommend that if you wish to come to exposition and/or confessions, to remain for a short time so that others may participate as well. We will evaluate how this works on Wednesday, so stay up to date if we make changes. Our intention is to repeat this each Wednesday. **Note that we will be marking locations in the pews where we ask individuals to sit. Please observe these directions, even if you are attending with someone else.**
  - c. For celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we have been directed not to use the usual confessional “booths” due to the small space. By Wednesday, we will come up with another way. Note, though, that those going to confession must do so anonymously. There will be two priests present to hear confessions.
  - d. There will be no tri-parish Lenten Penance Service.
  - e. Unfortunately, we are not able to keep the church open/unlocked. Our church building has a history of people who have come into the church and done such things as defecating in the back rows, stealing things from the church, and one time someone even set fire to a missalette. Plus, I cannot guarantee the safety of those who may be in there. I have communicated this with the bishop and he gave me permission to refrain from opening the church.
3. Anointing of the Sick



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- a. Fortunately, our parish has Fr. Rob who is a trained hospital chaplain and understands what needs to be done in order to maximize the safety and health of those who are ill, or for those administering Sacraments.
  - b. Note that area healthcare facilities and open residences (such as the Oaks, Northpointe woods, etc) are limiting or denying access to anyone.
  - c. However, *in the case of an emergency* (such as for the dying) the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick or administering Viaticum for the dying will be celebrated. Contact the parish office (968-6645) if this is the case.
4. Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound
- As of now, at the directive of the bishop, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are not permitted to bring communion to anyone. Only the priests or deacon may do so. We are working on a way to have the faithful make this request.
5. Celebration of other Sacraments
- a. As of now, if a baptism is scheduled, we will celebrate the sacrament, but the people present is limited to 50 people or less, and they must follow proper “social distancing.” It is recommended that only parents, godparents, and immediate family members be present.
  - b. Regarding weddings: These, too, will be celebrated. But as of now, the attendance is limited to the priest or deacon, the bride and groom, the best man, and maid/matron or honor and no more than 45 additional people.
6. Funerals
- a. Of course, funerals will be celebrated but will be limited to no more than 50 people in the church. All must follow proper “social distancing” protocols.
  - b. There will be no funeral lunches at this time.
7. The Sacred Triduum (including Easter)
- a. At this time, these Masses will be celebrated as scheduled. This could change, however.
  - b. There will be no “blessing of food” on Holy Saturday.
8. The parish office will be open Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to Noon.
9. All non-essential Parish programs are to be postponed through Easter Sunday, April 12. These include social gatherings, Council meetings, etc. Bishop Bradley’s parish visits through April 12 have been postponed and will be rescheduled at a later date.
- a. I am particularly concerned about this, as some groups have already suggested or even held their meetings without adhering to this directive. There are no exceptions. If you are unsure of what “non-essential” means, please contact me and I will be happy to help.
  - b. Take special notice of the attachment especially (Section 2.2.d).
10. There will be no religious education classes through April 12. Please see the attachment (Section 2.3) for more guidelines. We are working on a plan regarding Section 2.3.a.



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11. There will be no "Midweek Faith Lift" or Lenten Presentations until further notice.
12. There will be no First Communion or RCIA retreat.
13. Please read and carefully discern the attachment Section 2.4.e.
14. Stations of the Cross will not take place on Fridays, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, Tuesday morning bible study, or communal prayers of the rosary will not be held.
  - We are working on the possibility to offer these devotions through online media.
15. You may wish to consider Part 4, page 8 of the attachment. It gives clear direction and anticipated problems. As a parish, we have already begun examining our budget to see where we may need to reduce or eliminate budgeted expenses.
  - a. At the same time, though, we will continue our Lenten plan of tithing the Sunday collection. To suspend this would send a message that a person tithes only when things are going well... But not when things are going not so well.
  - b. We have concluded the Lenten food drive.
16. Section 5, Page 9 and 10 of the attachment provides specific resources that may be helpful to us all.
17. Friday Fish Frys are canceled, but Sunday Suppers will continue (although by "takeout" only.)
18. The Thrift Shop will remain closed at least through April 12.
19. I recommend that we use this time wisely. Many of us may find that we have more time because of various cancelations. It's a good time to work on those projects that always seem to take a backseat because of how busy we are. It's also a great time for a little more prayer and a little more rest!
20. Our parish office has identified a list of over 70 elderly parishioners who we believe are homebound and may be unable to purchase groceries or some other important errand. We have reached about half of these parishioners so far. Most already have someone taking care of their practical needs, so we continue to offer our prayers and support.

I have no doubt that there are things I have missed, questions I have not answered, or vagueness in this message. There could be things you'd like me to reconsider or even mistakes I might have made. In those cases, let me know and if a change or clarification needs to be made I will send that to everyone if it applies to everyone.

***These updates are being sent in every way we are able to. Please share with others if they are not able to access them themselves. Also, check back frequently for any changes or updates.***



**ST. PHILIP**  
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Finally, we all know that anything could change at any moment. I humbly ask for your patience with me as I am trying to do my best to help steer our parish through these difficult times.

Let's keep each other in prayer during this extraordinary time.

Praised be Jesus Christ!

Fr. John