Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As you are well aware, by now, we are facing a unique challenge, as the coronavirus (COVID-19) finds its way into our local community. On Thursday, March 12th, Governor Mike DeWine issued a series of directives, aimed at limiting the scope and damage of the virus across Ohio. Later that same day, Bishop Robert Brennan (and the entire Ohio Conference of Catholic Bishops) published a letter in response to Governor DeWine’s executive order. You will find links to both of these documents, along with much more information, on the homepage of our parish website - www.spxreynoldsburg.com, under the “Corona Virus/COVID-19” link.

In this letter, I want to simply highlight three important points presented in the letter from the Bishops, and then to provide you with the specific plan we are implementing, here at St. Pius X.

First, the three key points from the Bishops’ joint letter:

1) Our Ohio Bishops write that they “dispense the Catholic faithful who reside in Ohio, and all other Catholics currently in Ohio, from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass, for the weekends of March 14-15, March 21-22, and March 28-29.”

What does that mean, exactly? To be dispensed from the Sunday obligation means that, for the next three weekends, you are excused from the Church’s ordinary expectation that Catholics attend Mass every weekend and Holy Day (which is how we normally fulfill the Third Commandment of the Lord: “Keep holy the Sabbath.”)

To be clear, dispensation from the Sunday obligation is different from the out-right cancelling of Mass. Weekend Masses are not being cancelled anywhere in the Diocese of Columbus. Here at St. Pius X, Fr. Milton and I will still be offering Masses, at the usual times on the weekends mentioned above. It is important to us to provide our parishioners with this weekly opportunity to worship our good Lord, and to join with you in experiencing the sustaining grace of the Eucharist, especially in these unsettling times.

2) The Bishops also emphasize their intention to “encourage all the faithful, in particular those who are sick, experiencing symptoms of illness, or are at risk of illness, to seriously consider refraining from Mass attendance.”

The point here is this: We want you to come to Mass. We always want you to join us for Mass - not just because it’s what the Lord asks; not just because it’s good for you, in lots of ways; but also, because it’s meaningful for us, your priests. Having you with us at Mass means having our parish - our family - join us in the most important and beautiful thing we will ever get to do with our lives. Please: come to Mass!
That said, we also want you to be safe, and careful, and healthy. So, as much as we truly want you to be with us at Mass, there are circumstances in which we understand that you cannot (and potentially ought not to) attend. There are times (almost always beyond our control) when situations, events, or conditions make coming to Mass a dangerous endeavor, whether we like it or not. As the Book of Ecclesiastes so eloquently reminds us: “There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens… a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces,” (Eccl. 3:1, 5).

If you are in a **high-risk** group, with regard to potentially contracting the coronavirus, then this may just be “a time to be far from embraces.” Who is at **high risk**? According to The Centers for Disease Control, this group includes:

a) **Older adults** (over 60 years old are high risk; over 80 years old are highest risk);

b) **People who have serious, chronic medical conditions like:** Heart disease, Hypertension, Diabetes, Kidney disease, Cancer, or Lung disease.

c) **People with compromised or unstable immune systems.**

Further, if you are concerned that you may have contracted the coronavirus, or if you have flu-like symptoms, or similar indications associated with COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath), please also consider that this may be “a time to be far from embraces” for you, as well. (Please also be sure to go to your doctor!) Remember that it is a just, prudent, and loving act to forgo attending Mass, when your intention is to protect others from contracting this potent virus. As I’ve mentioned previously in the bulletin: If you are unsure as to whether you are healthy enough to attend Mass, or if you may possibly be contagious, even that sincere uncertainty is sufficient reason for missing Sunday Mass, especially in this stage of pandemic.

3) The Bishops conclude their letter by asking us to pray to God “for all who are suffering from illness or disease of any kind, and for an easing of the tension caused by this situation.” I would simply add to that: a petition for God’s strength for the brave folks who are caring for the sick; for God’s inspiration for the dedicated people who are working on a cure/vaccine; for God’s mercy on those who have lost their lives to this virus (and for their bereaved loved ones); and finally for God’s peace and guidance for our parish and our world, as we push forward, together, in the days and weeks to come.

Finally, I want to share with you the plan we will be implementing here at St. Pius X.

**CHURCH:** It is our intention to take every precaution to protect the safety and well-being of each one of you. One of the ways in which the CDC has encouraged us to combat the COVID-19 pandemic is to practice “social distancing.” They define the term “social distancing” as “remaining out of general social settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others.” With this principle in mind, we have decided to make the following changes, for the next few weeks, or until the Governor/CDC lift the protective executive orders:

- 8:30am Weekday Masses continue.
- Every weekday, following Mass, the church will remain unlocked and accessible, until 9:00pm.
- 4:00pm Saturday and 12:00pm Wednesday Confessions are suspended.
-- Confessions will be offered by appointment, only, and held in the parish office.

- Anointing of the Sick continues.
- The Anointing of the Sick which was scheduled to be offered during Masses on March 21/22 will be postponed and rescheduled.

- Baptisms are suspended (unless in cases of emergency).

- Funerals continue. All funerals during this three-week period will only be held in the truncated form of a Funeral Ceremony (i.e., No Funeral Masses will take place until after the threat of the coronavirus abates.)

- Hospital/Sick Calls continue.

- Nursing Home Visits/Masses are suspended (as requested by these facilities).

- In-home Communion Calls are suspended.

**LITURGY:**

You can expect the following changes, if you do decide to attend Mass during this period of time:

Holy Water fonts will be drained.

Precious Blood will only be consumed by the priest celebrating the Mass.

At this time, we respectfully ask that those who normally receive the Eucharistic Host on their tongue would please refrain from doing so, and instead receive Holy Communion in the hand.

During the Sign of Peace, you will be invited to refrain from physical contact, and instead express your offering of peace with a wave.

Altar Servers are not obligated to attend Mass and/or assist in their normal roles at the altar during Mass. Likewise, they should not be concerned about finding a replacement, during this three-week period.

**SCHOOL:**

Our Children’s Center, Elementary School, and PSR program will all be closed for the next few weeks (beginning March 13th), with classes tentatively scheduled to resume on Monday, April 6th. We are certainly hopeful that our students, families, teachers, aides, and staff will be able to return to the classroom by then. That date will remain our goal, then, unless an extension of this break is otherwise directed.

I want to express my gratitude to Darren Smith, our principal, to Lisa Ruth, our assistant principal, and to all of our teachers, aides, and staff who already had lessons ready to send home with our students, on such short notice. I want you to know that our elementary school teachers will have regular opportunities to access the resources in their classrooms, in order to continue educating our students, while they are away.

**PARISH PROGRAMS/SOCIALS/EVENTS/DEVOTIONS/GATHERINGS:**

As part of the Governor’s overall strategy to reduce the threat/impact of the coronavirus, we have been asked to cancel or delay/reschedule all non-essential gatherings and activities, here at St. Pius X.
Therefore, while it may be disheartening and frustrating, we will have to sacrifice most/all of our normally scheduled gatherings for the next few weeks. A list of all of these cancellations and postponements accompanies this letter, for your information. I understand how trying this will be, and I thank you, in advance, for your patience and your understanding. The way I’m thinking about it is this: A period of three weeks of relative disappointments is surely worth it, if it means protecting even just one person from something that could devastate their life, destroy their health, and possibly prove fatal.

Please be sure to continue to check the parish website for the most current information and relevant updates, during this challenging time.

www.spxreynoldsburg.com

Peace and prayers,

Rev. Fr. David J. Young

LIST OF CANCELLATIONS AND POSTPONEMENTS:

Postponed events
Unplanned Pro-Life Movie
Girl Scout Tea Party
A Night in Green
School Musical
Packing of the Military Outreach
Speaker Pam Heil
Canceled Events

All Sports

AAU Basketball

Men’s Basketball

Music - All Groups/Choirs; Mass/Practice

RCIA, Grief Support Group

PSR

Donut Sunday

Brownies

Soup Suppers

Deanery Meeting; Bible Timeline

That Man Is You

The Armory

School Board

Finance Committee

Damascus Group

Bag Ladies

K of C events - Fish Fry, Pancake Breakfast

Lady Knights of Columbus

Men’s Faith Sharing

Youth Groups

Women’s Ministry
Festival Planning Committee
Post Men and Women’s Conference
Senior Luncheon
Divine Mercy
Rosary
Stations of the Cross
Cub Scouts
Knit and Crochet
Latchkey

Liturgical
Adoration/ Confession
School Penance
Parish Mission