

The Roman Catholic Parishes of Cape Elizabeth, Scarborough, and South Portland, Maine

Dear Parishioners,

Over the next ten days in the calendar of the Church, we will be transitioning from Jesus' Ascension into Heaven to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. The Catechism states, *Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, precedes us into the Father's glorious kingdom so that we, the members of his Body, may live in the hope of one day being with him forever.* Jesus' mission on Earth is completed, but He continues to walk with us, even through the roughest days.

We are prayerfully hopeful that, after nine long weeks, we are going to be able to open our sacred spaces for the celebration of the Eucharist. We are following guidelines and protocols that have been reviewed by Bishop Deeley. These guidelines provide a framework to create the procedures that work best for our parishes. Our first priority is the health and safety of all of our parishioners. That being said, we are encouraging those parishioners who are vulnerable due to age and chronic health conditions to consider remaining home and joining the community through our taped Mass. Every member of the faithful, out of Christian charity for our brothers and sisters in Christ, is asked to respect and follow the protocols for worship, which are based on reasonable medical advice and are meant to protect each other. These protocols will include entering and exiting from the designated door, wearing a mask at all times, being directed to your seat based on the physical distancing requirements and following directions for distancing during communion. There will not be water in our Holy Water fonts and we will ask people not to congregate in the narthex.

The dispensation from the Sunday obligation and Holy Day obligation will remain in effect until which time the Governor, the Maine CDC and Bishop Deeley deem it safe for large groups to gather.

Governor Mills stated that we will begin Stage 2 beginning June 1st. At this time, this means we can gather in groups of fifty. Therefore, our plan is to have individuals reserve a spot at the Mass of their choice. We are in the process of determining the best method for making these reservations and we know there will be other protocols to be implemented. I plan to have more information to you in my next letter.

Our first Masses will be on the weekend of June 6 and 7. At this time, I am the only priest in our cluster, and I am restricted to celebrating only four Masses on a weekend, so we will have a very different Mass Schedule. Our tentative plan is:

St Bartholomew	Saturday	9AM Mass
St Maximilian Kolbe	Saturday	4PM Mass
St Maximilian Kolbe	Sunday	8AM Mass
St John & Holy Cross	Sunday	10AM Mass

Beginning June 8, we will open St. Maximilian Kolbe Church for the celebration of daily Mass, Monday thru Friday, at 8AM. The decision to have all of the daily Masses at one location is meant to effectively utilize staff to consistently clean and minimize the cost of opening churches during the week.

We will not be able to accommodate everyone each Sunday. Out of charity, we ask that you consider reserving your spot for a weekend Mass every other week. If you are able to attend a weekday Mass, please consider taking advantage of those times rather than a Sunday Mass.

The one constant is change. There are many unknown factors before us. Please know that as we attempt to reopen the churches, we are also aware that any of our plans can change. We hope to always be ready to change, adapt or even abandon our plans.

Let us take this next step being prayerful, mindful of others and patient with each other.

Our parishes are still alive and active. Your generosity in time and treasure have been greatly appreciated. Over the past nine weeks we have continued to gather as a community in various ways. Our Adult Sacramental Preparation and RCIA classes have been meeting weekly. Our High School and Middle School Youth Ministries have been meeting weekly. Our Social Justice and Peace Commission met this week. Our music directors gathered virtually. We have been receiving messages from the parents of our High School seniors and are gathering a list of names to scroll at the end of our taped Mass on the weekend of June 14. We have had volunteers leading parishioners through the Rosary every Friday in May along with the Rosary Rally to commemorate Our Lady of Fatima. Our Mission committee gathered to make plans for a possible Mission Week in October. And we have a crew of Catechists who are working with the diocese in a program called New England Faith Forum to plan the future of our Faith Formation in the Cluster. None of this could happen without all of you.

Due to the pandemic, the annual Holy Cross School Live Auction had to be cancelled. The funds from this event go a long way to the success of our school. Even though we can't gather as a community physically, our school has found a creative way to share company, bid and outbid each other, and raise some money for our school. The auction will run from Friday, May 22 at noon until Sunday, May 24 at noon. To register: www.biddingowl.com/holycrossschool.

On this Memorial Day Weekend, we pray for those who courageously laid down their lives for the cause of freedom. They are an example of Christ's self-sacrificing love. We have been blessed by their service. The long-standing tradition of celebrating Mass on Memorial Day at Calvary Cemetery will break for one year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year Bishop Deeley will celebrate a Memorial Day Mass live-streamed from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Portland at 9 a.m., the time it would traditionally be celebrated at the cemetery. All are welcome to participate from home via livestream at www.facebook.com/PortlandCathedral or www.portlanddiocese.org/online-Mass.

Thank you again for all that you are doing to support our parishes. Be assured of my prayer support and I ask that you pray for me and all our staff who continue to serve on your behalf.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul F. Stefanko".

Msgr. Paul F. Stefanko