



St. Mary Parish

340 North Main Street • Hudson, Ohio 44236 • (330) 653-8118 • www.stmaryhudson.cc

March 20, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

It is my hope and my prayer that everyone is staying healthy and doing their part not to spread the coronavirus. We have cancelled all on-site parish activities through Easter – and the parish office is closed. The Bishops of Ohio have told all Catholics in Ohio that they are not obligated to attend Sunday Mass until after Easter – and that no Masses may be publicly celebrated at any parish until further notice. This includes Holy Week and Easter Sunday. Every diocese in the United States has now placed restrictions on the public celebration of Mass. We are never going to forget Lent, Holy Week and Easter of 2020!

Things have been very quiet on our parish grounds. Father Scott and I, as well as all of the members of our pastoral staff, miss the opportunity to gather with you in prayer, and to see and be with all of you personally. But we are not in retreat mode by any standard. In fact, our desire is to serve you more fervently and keep you connected to us, to one another and Saint Mary's. The staff are experimenting with new ways to achieve this while protecting their health and well-being, as well that of our parishioners, and the wider community. We have initiated video conferencing so that we can meet daily – and are extending that opportunity beyond pastoral staff gatherings. A couple of our parish ministries are currently experimenting with the use of video conferencing.

We are open to your suggestions and want to respond to any needs that you may have at this time. You can contact any member of the pastoral staff by phone and/or email. We are doing our best to respond to you in a timely manner. Right now we are trying to stay in contact with the entire parish community through Flocknote. If you aren't signed up to receive Flocknotes, I urge you to please do so in a timely manner.

We have begun livestreaming Mass at the parish. Mass will be celebrated on Monday through Friday at 9:00 am; 4:00 pm on Saturday, and 9:30 am on Sunday. At this time, you need to have a Facebook account to access the Mass live. The Facebook page you search for is StMaryHudson. Once the Mass has ended, you can view the Mass on our parish website, www.stmaryhudson.cc. As we celebrate Mass, Father Scott and I will be praying for the intentions that have been scheduled for each day – as well as praying for all of you, your intentions, and everyone who is impacted by this pandemic.

Given the recommendations of the Diocese of Cleveland regarding public celebrations of Mass and the Sacraments at this time, here are some realities that I need to bring to your attention.

Baptisms – are still a possibility based on “pastoral urgency.” The preference in scheduling a baptism is to wait until the current restrictions are lifted. However, if a baptism must take place before then, in order to limit the potential spread of the virus to a vulnerable population, that celebration will be limited only to the child being baptized, parents, godparents and presider.

Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) – is limited to only when absolutely necessary. If you have a question as to what that means, please contact either Father Scott or me. We are not able to provide confession via technology – and we must exercise every caution to contain the contagion.

One of the most respected canonists in the world, Archbishop Charles Scicluna, the Archbishop of Malta, offered the following comments regarding the need for Reconciliation during the time of this pandemic. "The Church teaches that venial sins are forgiven in Confession, through prayer, and by receiving Holy Communion. Spiritual Communion and the Rosary also forgive our venial sins. Whoever is aware of a grave or moral sin should make an act of contrition and a commitment to go to Confession when they can. The Lord will take care of the rest. We are in good hands." I can't think of any better reflection, or advice, than Archbishop Scicluna's words.

Funerals – a Memorial Mass that would be celebrated at a time when the current restrictions are lifted is strongly recommended. The Rite of Committal would be celebrated at the cemetery with immediate family members only, remembering the 10-person gathering limit, and keeping in mind the call for social distancing. If a Funeral Mass is celebrated while restrictions are in place, the attendees will be limited to immediate family – no more than 9 individuals, the priest celebrant, and no music or other liturgical ministers present for the Funeral Mass. The published obituary should make note that the "Funeral Mass and burial are private" – with no announcement of time and place and no visitation in the church.

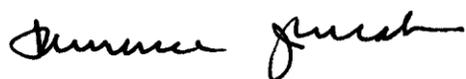
Communion to the sick and homebound – will take place only when absolutely necessary or based on pastoral urgency, and only by a priest or deacon until the current restrictions are lifted. The clergy must use extreme caution to protect themselves from the contagion – and use a cotton swab for the anointing. All nursing homes and other assisted living facilities in the state of Ohio are not permitting any visitors, including clergy, unless it is an absolute necessity.

There is something that we must remember as we face this pandemic. For most of us, this is the most serious health problem that we have had to face as a society in our lifetime. As we face what lies ahead, it is important that we do so from a perspective of faith. The coronavirus has no known cure. In that sense it is greater than us. It is greater than our leaders, greater than our medical professionals. But it is NOT greater than Jesus! God continues to be active and present in our world, and as always God stands with us to give us the strength and wisdom for whatever we need to face.

Now the perspective of faith does not make us immune from this virus, and it certainly does not give us the freedom to ignore the directives given to us by our leaders – civil and religious. As a matter of fact, as people of faith we should be doubly attentive to see that we wash our hands regularly, avoid public gatherings, and keep social distancing. In doing so we are showing charity to others. We should also think of those isolated by this crisis such as a shut-in in our neighborhood who might need food or medicine or a friend or a relative in a nursing home or assisted living facility who would appreciate a phone call or a card. We should also think of those frightened by the prospects to come and be in contact with them by phone to give support.

And, of course, we should pray. We should pray for those who have the virus, that others would not contract the virus, for our political leaders, religious leaders, and for our health care professionals. You and I face a crisis of historical proportions, but God is greater than the coronavirus. So, let us draw on God's wisdom and God's strength to support one another until this virus is defeated.

Your brother in Christ,



Reverend Lawrence Jurcak
Pastor