

August 30, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Please see Bishop Bradley's letter regarding the extension of the general dispensation from physical participation at Sunday and Holy day Masses. **The general dispensation has been extended through November 22, 2020 (the Feast of Christ the King, the last Sunday of the Church Year).** We plan to have the outdoor Mass on the campus of St. Mary's Visitation at least through this time. The capacity of our churches for the foreseeable future for indoor Mass remains at 25%. We are asked to continue wearing masks and following all the distancing and cleaning requirements for the same period for indoor Masses. We continue to promote everyone coming to the outdoor Mass in the meantime as a safe a reasonable option given the circumstances.

Please remember that even though the general dispensation persists, none of us is dispensed from keeping the Lord's Day holy by praying, reading the Bible, resting, recreating in appropriate ways, and doing good for others. For those who have not been keeping the Lord's Day holy in these ways and have been away from Mass by justly utilizing the dispensation, we encourage you to keep the Sabbath in these appropriate ways. Please remember to make a good confession before receiving Communion if you have not kept the Lord's Day holy in these other ways during this time. Keeping Sunday holy is a serious and essential part of living a Christian life. It is also important to remember that confession of our sins in the Sacrament of Penance at least once a year is essential. We go to confession because we want to maintain our souls in a state of sanctifying grace as believers. Being in a state of sanctifying grace is essential to keeping our spiritual union with God now and to be ready to meet the Lord at the end of our lives. We should also be in a state of sanctifying grace when we receive any other sacrament. Even if we can't come to Mass, it isn't spiritually healthy to *starve* our souls of prayer and of the grace of the Sacraments for too long.

St. Mary's Visitation and St. Stanislaus Schools have begun this past week. All seemed to go well in spite of several adjustments for Covid-19. We pray that all of our families whether in Catholic School or, public school, or home-school are adjusting well as we begin a new year together. Please keep in mind that at both of our Catholic Schools in our Collaborative are getting very close to capacity and have a few places open for new students. If you believe that our Catholic Schools would be good for your children given the reduced school day schedule in many schools, please call soon. Catholic Schools form children in divine faith, human values, life-long morals, excellent academics, and charity for others. Our Schools are safe and family oriented. What could be more important in the world today!

As a reminder, at this point, the only in person activities and events that may be held on parish grounds, with the restrictions already in place, are Masses and religious services, regular school classes, religious education meetings and classes, and support group meetings such as AA. All other activities and events continue to be cancelled until we move into the next phase of the Covid-19 response. Family catechesis for all students and families in our parishes is also beginning soon. Please see the bulletin, recent home mailings, or our parish websites for information. Please contact Tommy Shultz, our Director of Evangelization and Faith Formation with any questions.

On Labor Day weekend at St. Mary's Visitation, the Masses will be celebrated in honor of the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (the Birth of Mary). The date of this feast day is traditionally September 8, nine months after we celebrate Mary's Immaculate Conception on December 8. SMV is able to celebrate that feast day on the closest Sunday in ordinary time because it is one of the parish's two feast days (The Birth of Mary, September 8, and The Visitation, May 31). The church building at SMV is dedicated under the title of the Nativity of Mary. All are certainly welcome, especially at the outdoor Mass next weekend, as we celebrate this wonderful occasion. Unfortunately, due to the restrictions, we will not be able to have a breakfast or dinner as part of the celebration as we have in the past. However, the Mass is the greatest celebration we could ever have on earth!

Please don't forget to participate in some way in our 90 Novena of Holy Hours for the Country and the World. It is so important that we pray now more than ever for countless reasons!

Over the last many weeks we have been considering whether time and history is moving toward the fulfillment of Christ's promises for the ultimate triumph of His Kingdom. We have reflected on Jesus' prophecies about a time of tribulation, a time of peace, and ultimately His second Coming in glory. The last few weeks we have been considering messages from the Blessed Virgin Mary from some of her recent visits to visionaries. Those that we mentioned have either been recognized as authentic or are close to being declared so. In recent weeks, we have focused on Our Lady's messages of Fatima, Medjugorje, and Akita. Last week we focused on the criteria the Church uses to judge the authenticity and veracity of any apparition of prophecy/message from those who claim to have a message from heaven. We also promised to delve into some of these messages that do not necessarily have current approval by the Church but do not contradict anything that Christ and the church teach. We gave the Church's criteria to you last week so that you can use that criteria to judge any prophecy of claimed message from heaven that you may hear or see during these days of so many events and happenings in our world. We don't have the space to propose a new message this week. We will in the coming weeks. However, here is the reported message from Our Lady at Medjugorje for the month of August for your reflection and discernment:

Our Lady to Marija, one of the Medjugorje Visionaries , on August 25th, 2020:

“Dear children! This is a time of grace. I am with you and anew am calling you, little children: return to God and to prayer until prayer will be a joy for you. Little children, you do not have a future or peace until your life begins with a personal conversion and a change to the good. Evil will cease and peace will begin to reign in your hearts and in the world. Therefore, little children, pray, pray, pray. I am with you and intercede before my Son Jesus for each of you. Thank you for having responded to my call.”

As we have mentioned week after week, it is time to pray, especially the Rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, time to repent and come to Confession, time to come to Eucharist Adoration and Holy Mass if you are physically able, and time to fast and do penance and acts of charity for the conversion of others. As we have also been encouraging for the last five months, please remember that the grace of Christ that we receive in His Sacraments is our sure refuge during these days. We are all being called to find refuge in Confession and to Jesus present in the Holy Eucharist. Once again, included below, is the liturgical schedule with additional Confession times, Mass times, and adoration times. Weekday Mass times may be adjusted on special days so please remember to check the parish Mass intention Mass section of the bulletin to confirm weekday Mass times. Please remember the Catholic precept to confess sins in the Sacrament of Penance and to receive Holy Communion at least once during or near the Easter Season. Confessions are done in a socially distanced way in the church or outside on the parish grounds. We have many extra confession times scheduled. If you are unable to come to church or someone is home-bound and in need of any of the Sacraments, please let us know and the priest or deacon will come to you!

In Mary, the Queen of Peace,

Fr. Derda, Fr. Steve, Deacon Russ and Deacon Ed