

March 31, 2020

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

Blessings to each of you on this day! I hope each of you is taking time to enjoy it. We all need a break now and then before “cabin-fever” sets in our homes. Be kind to one another and think of things you can do every day as a family.

A few words of gratitude. In the midst of this pandemic, I know it is often hard to focus on what we have rather than what we don't have. When, as Pope Francis said on Friday during his prayers for the city and world, *“Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void, that sops everything as it passes by...we find ourselves afraid and lost”*, it is difficult to give thanks, to live a life of gratitude. But we must. In that light, I wanted to thank so many of you for your kind emails to me and our staff for many things. We are trying our best to help keep all of us connected during a time when it seems as if we are all alone. Thank you. As I said at Mass this past Sunday, I miss each of you more than you know. Our church is not the same without your presence. I miss hearing us sing, pray, filling the space with energy and blessings. I assure you, we will come back and when we do, let our singing shake the very floor and rafters. Until then, let us connect to one another through prayer.

So, too, I wish to thank so many of you for bringing the requested food staples asked for by our St. Vincent de Paul Society. Picture this: the entire tops of the cabinets in the hallway, leading to the restrooms, filled with bags of food. Thank you so much for your generosity. As you can imagine, these times are especially difficult for the poor and marginalized who have little, if any, support systems to help them. Your gifts will help others have food on their tables during a time when it seems they truly get lost in the cracks. They still need more supplies, so if you can bring them to the Gathering Space of church it would be most appreciated. Thank you!

Moreover, I wish to thank some of our school children who have requested from me the names and address of all of our parishioners who are regularly shut-in their homes for various reasons. You have no idea what a handwritten note, drawing, or kind word brings to the hearts of those truly confined. If any of you would like to do this as

well, please send an [email](#) to me and I will be more than happy to forward them to you. It's one of those things you can do as a family. Thank you!

Additionally, I would like to thank all of our parishioners who are making masks for the many on the front lines who truly need them. A plastic container is present in the Gathering Space of church and by the Parish Office front doors marked "Masks." If you are interested in making them, click [here](#). Thank you!

Furthermore, I wish to thank all those who went to our Online Giving site in order to give their Sunday contributions, as well as those who dropped off their Sunday contributions. It not only means a lot to me, but more importantly, to the many here on our campus who are still getting paid during this time, especially our dedicated teachers and parish staff. If you have not signed up for it, you can click [here](#). Thank you!

Also, we have put on our website under the tab "Worship in Time of Crisis" a section entitled "Prayer request." When you access this page and see it, you will notice a blank square where you can write your request and then hit "submit." When they arrive, I will put your request in our Holy Family Grotto and light a candle along with them. It's one way of keeping connected and holding others in prayer.

Palms will be available in the Gathering Space beginning on Sunday. If you come to take some, *I'm imploring you to first*, use the gel to wash your hands *before* you begin to go through the palms. It's just another way we can be of help and support to one another.

Lastly, please know, each day you are being held in prayer as we pass through this crisis. Like Pope Francis said on Friday, I'm entrusting all of us to the Lord and to Mary, Star of the Stormy Sea, a replica I own and have placed in our church with a candle near it. Click [here](#) for a link to Pope Francis's homily, which I thought was quite moving. My prayer is that the loving embrace of God will hold you, enfold you, and whisper in your heart..."Do not be afraid..."

Blessings and peace,

Fr. Larry

March 25, 2020

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

I am sure many of you are trying to be “creative” at home as you deal with having all the children home, spouses home, and how to keep the peace and creativity going. It’s not an easy task, so please know I’m thinking of all of you during this difficult time.

So, too, as we continue to light our candles and pray, let’s especially pray for all those people in our own city, state and country who cannot stay at home. Indeed, each of us needs to thank them and hold them in prayer as they journey out each day to help and support our communities. Remember, each day they are putting their lives on the line for so many, and to them, I say: Thank you! Write a note and put it in your mailbox addressed to the person who delivers your mail. Put a note on your trashcans to thank them for collecting each week. Thank an employee at Kroger, Meijer, Costco, or wherever you shop. They show up every day and try their best to keep the shelves stocked. In this time of darkness, be light for someone.

- Church will be open for prayer during the day. Just remember, if you choose to come, please keep a healthy distance between anyone else who might be there.
- Confessions will be heard this coming Saturday from 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. Measures have been taken to try and make sure the room is disinfected.
- This coming Sunday’s Mass, the Fifth Sunday of Lent, will be on our [website](#) this coming Saturday. Remember: there is also a worship aid you can download and follow along, as well as sing at home. Singing can gladden the heart!
- If you are able and willing to sew cloth mask covers to be worn over surgical masks, please click [here](#) for more information regarding patterns and logistics.

- Finally, during this time of being "alone-together", let us remember that we are never alone when we gather to pray. Every day at noon there is a group of parishioners who are gathering in their homes to pray the rosary. You are cordially invited to join them in such prayer. Perhaps you can gather around your lit candle and pray as a family. Remember to hold all those who have been affected by the Coronavirus in your prayer. So, too, hold all those who are on the front line dealing with the sick, the dying, and those in research trying to come up with a vaccine, and the many who are trying to keep our lives as "normal" as possible as we make our way through the crisis. Perhaps at the end of praying the rosary, the following prayer could be said:

*Lord Jesus,
You traveled through towns and villages
curing every disease and illness among the people.*

*At your command, the sick were made well.
Come to our aid now in this health crisis
so that we may know your healing love.*

*Heal those who are sick: may they regain their health and strength.
Heal us from our fear, which prevents us from helping one another.
Heal us from our pride, which makes us certain of our health and life apart
from you.*

*Bless health care professionals with strength and
compassion as they selflessly respond to our needs.*

*We make this prayer in your strong and holy name,
you, who with the Father and the Spirit,
live and reign for ever and ever.*

Again, I cannot thank you enough for your patience and resiliency during this extraordinary time in our personal history. Take care of yourselves. Keep your eyes on those in your neighborhood who might need help. Be grateful for what you have. Thank someone who doesn't have the luxury of staying at home. I miss you.....

Blessings,

Fr. Larry



March 23, 2020

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

My hope, and prayer, is that each of you is staying safe, staying home, and trying to stay healthy! Let's all be smart by listening and heeding the advice of those in public service who are encouraging us to do what is best for everyone during this time of the Coronavirus. So, too, if any of you know parishioners who need someone to get groceries for them, please call the Parish Office (683.0105), leave word and someone will call you back in a timely fashion. We are here to help you during this time of suffering. So, too, keep a watchful eye on your neighbors who might need your help as well.

My personal thanks to all of you who picked up a candle and are using it to remind ourselves that we are all still connected to one another. Light it. Gather around it. Hold your family, our parish family, and world in such prayer. I especially ask you to hold in prayer the many who have been affected by the virus. So, too, I am grateful for the many who saw and wrote kind responses to me regarding the taped Sunday Mass on our website. This coming Sunday's Mass has been taped and will be put on our parish website this coming Saturday. Our hope is to have our Holy Week services on the website as well. A huge thanks to the parish staff for helping to make this happen. Please know we are all holding you in prayer as we live in a kind of "exile" from one another and our community of faith.

Below are some important pieces of information that I feel you need to know as we work our way through this pandemic. Indeed, we will work through this and we will do it all together.

- In light of the Governor's mandate, the Parish Office will be closed until April 6th. However, if you need something or someone, please call and transfer to the proper person's extension. All of us have access to email and phone messages from home.
- The church building itself will remain unlocked during the day as it has been.

- For your convenience, here is the link to the page with Mass and other resources like our regularly prepared worship aid, Daily Mass links, Stations of the Cross and some recorded hymns from our choir.
- Your support of the St. Columban Conference of St. Vincent de Paul has always been tremendous and we ask you to keep them in prayer during this pandemic. Chances are, demand for their services will increase two or three-fold come the end of the month. While picking up your own grocery needs, if you are able, the following are key needs in the pantry at this time: canned chicken and tuna, applesauce, canned fruit and vegetables, rice, pasta, canned beans, crackers, soup, beef stew, chili, peanut butter, jelly, cereal, pancake mix, syrup, Hamburger Helper, mac and cheese, and cookies. Donations can be left in the Gathering Space.
- For a glimmer of hope in the midst of this pandemic, please click here to see how our brothers and sisters in Italy are dealing with it. Enjoy...

Thanks for your patience through all of this. I miss seeing and hearing you here at church. It's not the same without you. We are going to get through this. Let's hold everyone in prayer.

Prayer in time of a Pandemic

Almighty and ever-living God,
 heal those who are ill,
 comfort those who mourn,
 give solace to all who are afraid and alone,
 and protect those who are providing medical care.
 Make us instruments of your peace
 among our brothers and sisters.
 In your mercy, alleviate our fears
 and eliminate this scourge,
 so that we may come together again
 to give you praise and to build your Kingdom.
 Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Many blessings,
 Fr. Larry

March 20, 2020

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

As the Psalmist wisely says, “*The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?*” As I said to those who gathered this past Sunday for Mass, “Fear is not our friend.” I firmly believe that. Let’s be smart, let’s do what is right and just, and hold fast to God in prayer and, through prayer, hold each other together while we are separated. That was one purpose of having candles available. Gather around it. Light it. Remembering that Jesus Christ is the light of the world and calls us into that marvelous light to be the same for others. Each week I am lighting a candle on behalf of our entire parish and placing it in our Holy Family Grotto asking for protection and peace, along with God’s healing balm to the many who have been affected by the virus.

Here are a few friendly reminders:

- Go to our website, click on the tab *Worship in Time of Crisis* for all of our prayers and updates.
- Mass will be posted on that same page each weekend for your convenience. Along with it, please note there is a regularly prepared worship aid for you to follow along as a family. Who knows, you might even sing along as a family!
- Confessions will be held this Saturday from 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.
- Church, the Day Chapel, and the Eucharistic Reservation Chapel will be open every weekday until 5:00 p.m., Saturday from 2:00-5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 8:00 a.m. – Noon.
- If you came to church Wednesday morning and picked up a prayer candle, I ask you to come back and get the glass container it sits in. While I’m sure it’s safe to light as is, it’s even safer to have the glass around the insert. We put them out for your convenience.
- We have parishioners who were home bound prior to this virus for health or other reasons. If your family is interested in sending a card, they will most definitely appreciate it. Click [here](#) to receive a name or two.

I cannot thank you enough for your patience, wisdom, and love through all of this. If you would have asked me forty years ago when I was ordained, that

Sunday Eucharist would be closed down, I would have said you were crazy. Well, here we are. I know in my heart that not only will we get through, but that we will get through this t-o-g-e-t-h-e-r and grow even closer as a faith community.

A former student sent me this prayer she received and I share it with you. I'm grateful for its author, Lynn Ungar.

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.

Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.
Lynn Ungar 3/11/20

Blessings and peace, Fr. Larry

March 16, 2020

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

Grace and peace to you as we continue this perilous journey of the effects of the coronavirus. I just received the following memo from the Catholic Bishops of Ohio that I now, with personal sadness, share with you regarding the celebration of the Eucharist here at St. Columban and around the entire State of Ohio. We will abide by this statement beginning today, March 16, 2020. When more information is forthcoming, you will be the first to know.

Continued blessings and peace,
Fr. Larry

On March 16, 2020, the Roman Catholic Bishops of Ohio issued a letter suspending all publicly celebrated Masses/Liturgies at least through the celebrations of Holy Week and Easter.

The letter follows: RE: Catholic Bishops of Ohio Suspend All Publicly Celebrated Masses/Liturgies

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

After serious consideration of the grave health risk involved in public gatherings and in order to curb the spread of the Coronavirus, the bishops of Ohio have decided, effective immediately, to suspend temporarily all publicly celebrated Masses/liturgies, at least through the celebrations of Holy Week and Easter. The bishops of Ohio dispense the Catholic faithful who reside in their respective dioceses and all other Catholics currently in Ohio from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass through Easter Sunday.

This decision is not taken lightly and, as your bishops, causes us great sadness. However, after consultation with the governor and health officials we are convinced that this is the most prudent and necessary action.

Science has proven that participation in public gatherings significantly increases the risk of contagion. This poses a serious danger to those especially most vulnerable.

As Catholics, in every Sunday Mass we celebrate the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord. The Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith. In this moment, we are experiencing in a unique way the passion of our Lord as this pandemic prevents us from gathering for the Sunday Eucharist. In this very difficult time, we encourage the faithful to turn to the Church's treasury of prayer. Sunday remains a holy day, and we encourage the faithful to pray using the rich resources of our faith, including praying as a family or individually the rosary, divine mercy chaplet, the Liturgy of the Hours, stations of the cross, etc. We also urge you to participate in prayer by way of radio broadcast or televised or live-streamed Mass and make a spiritual communion.

Please join us in praying for all who are suffering from illness or disease of any kind, for all health care workers, and for an easing of the anxiety and tension caused by this situation. Relying on the Motherly care of Our Lady, we unite our sufferings to those of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our healing and our hope.

Most Rev. Dennis M. Schnurr
Chairman
Catholic Conference of Ohio
Archbishop of Cincinnati

Most Rev. Joseph R. Binzer
Auxiliary Bishop
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Most Rev. Robert J. Brennan
Bishop of Columbus

Most Rev. Jeffrey M. Monforton
Bishop of Steubenville

Most Rev. George V. Murry, S.J.
Bishop of Youngstown

Rev. Donald P. Oleksiak
Diocesan Administrator of Cleveland

Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas
Bishop of Toledo

March 13, 2020

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

As promised, I am updating you on a few things. First, the celebration of the **Sacrament of Confirmation**. We have been in contact with Bishop Binzer and he said he is still coming to celebrate the sacrament with us tomorrow, Saturday, at 10:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. In light of that, our recommendations are these:

- Families, please use your best judgment as to which guests will attend.
- We are discouraging those whose health is comprised, or at risk, not to attend.
- As a precaution, there will not be a reception after the celebration.
- We are going to record the celebration and make it available on our website in a timely fashion.
- If you chose not to attend, we will make plans for those candidates to receive the sacrament at a later date.

Second, we are going to cancel all celebrations of the **Way of the Cross** during Lent, including tonight's scheduled time.

Third, we are recommending that **groups in the parish** not meet until Monday, April 13th. However, if you believe it's vital to meet during this time frame, please let our Communications and Events Coordinator, [Cathy Nagy](#), know of such plans.

Fourth, our parish **Fish Fry** is still on tonight. However, it will be limited to drive-thru only. Future Fish Frys will be reassessed on a week-by-week basis and we will let you know. Stay tuned!

Finally, as a precaution, we have implemented extra cleaning measures in church and school.

Thanks so much for your patience and understanding through this difficult time. As many have said, we are trying our best to navigate through uncharted waters and so it's not easy to make these decisions, as I know the same is true for you and your household.

Meanwhile, be attentive to one another, especially those who most need help.

Blessings,
Fr. Larry

March 12, 2020

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

I am writing this as a follow-up to the letter sent to you yesterday, Wednesday, March 11th regarding some liturgical changes taking place here at St. Columban due to the coronavirus. In light of Governor Mike DeWine's issuing an executive order this afternoon regarding the avoidance of large mass gatherings, specifically those of 100 or more in a single room or space, I have an update from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati that I wanted to share with you.

Even though religious gatherings are expressly *excluded* in the Governor's order, the Catholic Bishops of Ohio have agreed to cooperate with the order. Thus, beginning immediately and continuing until further notice:

*** Catholics in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati are dispensed from their Sunday Mass obligation through the weekend of March 28-29.**

* Masses may be celebrated as currently scheduled with the following restrictions:

- o No holding hands during the Our Father
- o Suspension of exchanging the Sign of Peace with any kind of physical contact
- o No reception of Holy Communion from the chalice
- o No reception of Holy Communion on the tongue

* For health reasons, baptismal fonts should be drained.

* Unconsecrated bread and wine used for Mass should be kept out of public areas.

Furthermore, general precautions should continue to be followed, specifically:

*** Those who are sick, experiencing symptoms of illness, or are at risk should be strongly encouraged not to attend Mass and, out of charity to their brothers and sisters in Christ, remain at home.**

* Priests, deacons and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should practice good hygiene, washing their hands thoroughly before Mass begins and, if possible, using an alcohol-based anti-bacterial solution discreetly before and after distributing Holy Communion.

* All vessels should be cleansed thoroughly after Mass with hot, soapy water.

In addition, our celebrations of the Sacrament of Confirmation this coming Saturday, March 14 are allowed to take place. However, non-sacramental parish events or gatherings should be cancelled.

If I receive anything else, please know I will share it with you in a timely fashion. Meanwhile, as we hunker down and try to deal with this pandemic, I have included a prayer to put all of this in some kind of perspective, at least for me. I share it with you.....

Prayer for a Pandemic

May we who are merely inconvenienced
Remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors
Remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home
Remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close
Remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips

Remember those that have no place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market
Remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home
Remember those who have no home.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,
Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors. Amen.

March 11, 2020

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

Grace, mercy and peace to all of you during this time of Lent. I pray the time has been fruitful as we get close to the half-way mark of this holy season. Know I have been holding you in prayer as our journey continues.

I know many of you, if not most of you, have been paying close attention to all the media coverage the Coronavirus has received in the past week. Indeed, it has impacted not only almost every country, but so many lives around the world, especially the homeless, the poor, the elderly, the young and others whose health is already compromised. In fact, many universities have now either sent students home to work online, or they have been quarantined to their dorms to continue their academic work. I ask you to hold all of them in our thoughts and prayers as we get through this together.

The virus is causing us to make some liturgical changes here at St. Columban in regards to the celebration of the Eucharist. First, we are going to temporarily suspend drinking from the cup. While this truly saddens me, I believe that in light of the safety of all, we must do it. Second, I am asking you when the sign of peace comes around, that you wish Christ's peace in a verbal manner rather than any physical contact. Third, I am asking those who take communion on the tongue to please take it in the hand or to be last in line so that there can be no chance of spreading germs via the tongue or hand. I thank all of you in advance for your kindness and patience as we navigate through uncharted waters.

Moreover, you will notice stands at the doors of church with antibacterial gel for you to use when you come into church or when you leave. I know many of you bring your own, but I thought it would be good to have some handy in case others need it.

Again, I want to thank each of you for your patience during this time. I have been a priest for forty years and never, ever, had to make changes like this. However, I pray that they are not only temporary changes, but that we all get through this in an orderly fashion.

Blessings and peace,
Fr. Larry