

My Dear Parishioners,

As you have probably heard, our Diocese has had to make the very difficult decision to temporarily *suspend the public celebration of the Holy Mass, beginning March 20, 2020 through April 20, 2020*. In doing so, we are acting in concert with many other Catholic dioceses around the country and the world in order to do our part to combat the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and to protect the health and well-being of our people, especially those among us who are elderly or who suffer with health difficulties. We choose now to forgo, for a *temporary* period of time, the public celebration of the Holy Mass, and therefore to fast from the reception of Holy Communion, for the purpose of protecting the health of our people, to protect our brothers and sisters in the medical field from being overwhelmed with cases, and to do our part as a Church to assist the public in attempting to contain the spread of this illness.

Being unable to participate in the celebration of Mass and receive Holy Communion is indeed a very heavy burden and cross to carry. But I am also *very hopeful* for several reasons. First, please be assured that as Fr. Michael Lyons and I are offering Mass privately in the days to come, we will not only offer them for the intentions requested, but will most certainly be thinking of and praying for all of you, for your health, your spiritual growth, and for the gift of perseverance during these trying times. Second, opportunities for the **sacrament of penance** will continue. At Holy Spirit, confessions will be heard on Saturdays from 3:30pm – 4:30pm *in one of the classrooms in the education center*, so please access it through the educational center door on the side of the school. At St. Mary's, confessions will be heard on Saturdays from 6:30pm – 7:30pm *in the crying room in the back of the Church*. I do ask that when you go to confession, please observe the social distance of approximately six feet by either using the chair that will be set up for this purpose to go to confession face-to-face, or, when going to confession behind the screen, please sit in the chair provided so that you can remain a few feet back from the screen. Third, both of our parish Churches **will be open for private prayer every day** for certain hours of the day; you can check your parish's website for the times that the Churches will be open for prayer. And finally, we can commune with our Lord in a special way by **making acts of spiritual communion** frequently (see below), trusting that while we cannot receive His Body and Blood through Holy Communion right now, He will certainly nourish us with His love and grace when we ask in faith through an act of spiritual communion.

Understanding that your ability to be physically present at Holy Spirit and St. Mary's has been affected, and that the current crisis is causing financial challenges to many in our midst, we remain grateful for your continued financial generosity. To ensure the parish is able to meet our financial obligations and assist the most vulnerable in our community and live our on-going mission, *we ask you to continue your financial support*. We are currently in the process of establishing the ability for electronic and online giving at Holy Spirit parish. If Holy Spirit parishioners are interested in contributing electronically, please contact the parish office for instructions. For St. Mary's parishioners, if you would like to see the addition of an electronic giving option, please contact the parish office and let us know. Contributions can also be mailed to the Church or dropped off at the parish offices. Office hours for each of our parishes will remain the same for the time being, and any changes will be posted on the parish website and noted on the parish office voicemail message.

Many of us have a deep desire to help during this Pandemic. Most importantly, take care of yourself and family. Check on elderly and high-risk neighbors, as they may be in need of supplies and unable to leave their home. Be thoughtful with your food purchases and use. Be a leader at work and in your community by following the social distance guidelines, and by encouraging those around you to have faith and not to be afraid!

My dear friends, our God is faithful, and He is generous in His gifts! Even though we cannot celebrate Holy Mass together right now, I firmly believe that God, who knows everything, sees our sacrifice and will give each of us the grace and love that we need to persevere and infinitely more. Hopefully this temporary forgoing of the public celebration of the Mass will serve to increase our hunger and thirst for God and our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. I look forward to the joyful day in the near future where we will be able to once again gather before God's holy altar and celebrate the Holy Eucharist! In the meantime, please know of my ongoing prayers for all of you during this time. As always, if you would like to contact me, the rectory number is (218) 834-4313 and my email address is fr.steven.laflamme@duluthcatholic.org. Please also make sure to frequently check our parishes' websites for updates and links to resources, including where you can find the online or televised celebration of the Holy Mass. May God bless and protect our community and keep us always in the center of His Heart!

In Christ our Lord,

Fr. Steve Laflamme

An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus,

I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things,

and I desire to receive You into my soul.

**Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.**

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen.