

# CHURCH OF ST. PATRICK

53 ST. PATRICK'S PLACE STATEN ISLAND, NY 10306

May 31, 2020

Dear Parishioner,

Sunday we will celebrate Pentecost, the second most important feast in the church year. This is the day we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, the day that the church was founded through the power of the Spirit of the Risen Lord. The apostles and disciples were hiding out in the Upper Room (120 of them), afraid that what happened to Jesus was going to happen to them. Jesus had told them to wait until they received “power from on high.” That was what they were doing as they joined in constant prayer, awaiting the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise.

Then He came like a strong driving wind blowing through the house, settling upon them like tongues of fire, filling them with His power, His courage, His peace, His joy, and His love. They began speaking in tongues, prophesying and proclaiming the great works of God. They spilled out of the Upper Room into the streets of Jerusalem where a great feast was going on. They no longer needed to hide. They no longer needed to be afraid. They had received what they needed to go out and proclaim the Good News from Jerusalem, through Judea, Galilee, Samaria, even to the ends of the earth (Rome).

We have been living in our own Upper Rooms, afraid to go out, afraid that what happened to the 100,000 will happen to us, or to our relatives and friends. Like the apostles and disciples we have been waiting, hoping, praying for that day when we can safely go out to spread the good news, to reach out to those who have lost loved ones, to help those who have lost jobs, homes, livelihoods, and even hope. We want to be able to return to our normal activities, to have our lives restarted—but we want even more. We want the Holy Spirit to come upon our community and raise us up to a level far beyond where we were in February. We don’t just want restoration. We want revival. We want the “power from on high” that will bring us to experience the feast of Pentecost in our lives and in our community.

But Jesus tells us “wait,” pray, hope, and believe that we will receive “power from on high.” At Pentecost it happened quickly. All of a sudden they were transformed and they came out of hiding. It may not be so quick or dramatic for us, but we pray that it be no less real or transformative as we gradually come out of the Upper Room. We are beginning to announce plans for re-opening of churches and schools throughout the Archdiocese, and as the state government signals that we have achieved the benchmarks that allows us to proceed, Cardinal Dolan will announce dates for re-openings first in the upper counties and then in the City. The opening is to take place in 5 stages.

1. Confessions.
2. Baptisms and Marriages with fewer than 10 people present. When we get to this stage we will schedule Baptisms and Marriages for those who are willing to abide by the numerical restrictions. Those that want to wait until larger crowds are possible will have to wait till later to have their celebrations.
3. Weekday scripture services with Holy Communion.
4. Daily Mass and Funerals (with numerical restrictions). When we have daily mass we will be able to have 1<sup>st</sup> Communions (10 people or less) for one child at a time. All the children, even those who have had small ceremonies, will be welcome at the large ceremony that we will celebrate when conditions permit.
5. Sunday Mass with church at 25% capacity. Since we will only be able to accommodate about 65 people in church, if there is an overflow we will ask the others to remain in their cars, watch the Mass on the internet, and wait while Eucharistic Ministers bring communion to them in their cars.

The hard part is waiting for the day when we will celebrate Mass and the sacraments the way we always have, and with whatever numbers choose to attend at any given time. But, we have been given the Holy Spirit at Confirmation and with Him have come gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, and we are given the grace of the Spirit to have patience, to consider the needs of the community, to worry about our vulnerable members, and to take whatever precautions we need to get all of us safely through this difficult time back to normal—and even better than normal. We want to come out of the Upper Room now, but the Holy Spirit, in His Wisdom, is telling us that we have to do it safely and responsibly.

We ask for His Wisdom and His Power as we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost.

God bless you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey B. Conway". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Jeff Conway, Pastor