



St. Simon Stock – Saint Joseph Church

Carmelite Friars

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Dear Parishioners,

I write to you to update you on some decisions that were made regarding Palm Sunday and Holy Week and the management of the Coronavirus pandemic here at St Simon Stock-St Joseph Church. As always, we will follow the directives of the Archdiocese of New York and the State and local government directives.

We received word yesterday from the Archdiocese of New York that there will be no public masses for Palm Sunday and all of Holy Week including Easter Sunday. In fact, this will be the case in most if not all of New York state and the surrounding states because of the seriousness of this pandemic. In times like this it is of utmost importance that everyone do all they can to remain healthy and avoid any exposure to the virus to the best of our ability. That said, as of the writing of this letter we will do the following:

1. The church will remain open for private prayer during the day each day of the week including weekends from 7:30am to 7pm. The Eucharist will be exposed for private prayer. We ask that no one sit within 6 feet of anyone else that is not a family member living in the same apartment.
2. Reconciliation Monday has been cancelled in this Archdiocese. However, Fr Mike and Fr Nicholas will be available for confession during this Lenten season. You can call the priory to arrange a time to come by. Or, if you see Fr Mike or Fr Nicholas in the church praying, feel free to come over and ask for confession. We will either hear your confession where we are or look for a more private place. Confessions normally will not be heard in the confessional since it is an enclosed place and more susceptible to spreading any virus.
3. On Palm Sunday (April 5th) and at the normal time of the Vigil the church will be open and Palms available that you can take back to your apartment. The palm will be blest privately before they are put out the in the church. There will be no mass or services for Palm Sunday in the church. However we do invite you to take some palms, sit in the church a distance from everyone else, read the readings including the passion which can be found in

the books in the pews and spend some time in private prayer. There will be a collection basket in front of the church for anyone who would like to leave their weekly donation to the parish.

4. There will be no masses on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, for the Easter Vigil or on Easter. However the church will be open for prayer until 8pm these days. We will have the Church appropriately decorated on these days and all are invited to come at any time, sit a distance from others and perhaps reflect on the readings for the holy day.
5. On Good Friday a cross will be displayed in the front of the altar and all are invited to come forward, kneel or bow in front of the cross as a sign of reverence reflecting on the sacrifice Jesus endured for our sake. Please do not touch or kiss the cross as we usually do on Good Friday.
6. The reception of sacraments at the Easter Vigil by those in our RCIA program have been postponed. Once we get direction from the Archdiocese as to when it will be safe to celebrate them they will be rescheduled.
7. We would like to remind all that mass is available online and on TV on Sundays. You can watch the private masses for any of these services that take place in the Vatican or at St Patrick's Cathedral by going to the website for each. Tomorrow, the 4th Sunday of Lent masses will be at 10:15 in English and 4pm in Spanish. The website to connect to the mass is: <https://www.saintpatrickscathedral.org/live>. There are also plenty of other sites where you can connect to the mass by using your computer, cellphone or any other device that connects to the internet.
8. Unfortunately, our Good Friday street procession and the Pascua Juvenil youth retreat, both of which have taken place here at St Simon Stock for many years have to be cancelled.
9. In line with the mandates of Governor Cuomo, all non-essential employees will be asked to work from home during their regularly scheduled hours and only come in to work on an "as needed" basis. The parish offices will be essentially closed until this "Shelter in Place" order is lifted. The parish staff will still work from home and we hope to be able to remain in communication with all through our parish website, parish Facebook and by using other means of communication.
10. Feel free to call the parish office during the day. In an emergency call at any time. There is a chance the phone may not be answered since the secretaries will be out. If this is the case, leave a message as directed in both English and Spanish. Each time a message is left in my voicemail box I get a text

and can get the message right from my cellphone. We will respond to all pastoral needs as quickly and safely as possible.

11. The scheduled 1st communion, 1st reconciliation for those in our Religious Education program will very likely be postponed. The June 1st date for those receiving confirmation may also have to be postponed depending on the progress and spread of the Coronavirus. When we have a new date Sr Lourdes or someone from the Religious Education program will be in contact with you as soon as possible.

Certainly not being able to attend Holy Week services and receive the Eucharist at this most holy time is disappointing. Yet, with the spread of the virus it is the wise thing to do. I remind all that it has long been a Catholic understanding that when circumstances prevent one from receiving communion, it is possible to make an Act of Spiritual Communion, which is a source of grace when we cannot receive the Eucharist. These acts of spiritual communion normally increase our desire to receive sacramental communion and help us avoid the sins that would make us unable to receive communion worthily. This time, like no other, can be a beautiful time of prayer and appreciation for the Eucharist. So, come, visit the church. Spend some time before the Blessed Sacrament.

May Mary, Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St Joseph protect us, the health care workers and all those who come down with the coronavirus.

May God bless you and keep you in his care,

Fr Mike