

Dear Parishioners,

March 15, 2021

During these days of Lent, I hope you are finding some time for additional prayer. You are in my prayers daily. I thank you sincerely for your support and concern during my trip home to see my parents. It meant so much to have you with me.

In the meantime, because there are several people who must be at work at 8:00 a.m., who are attending our weekday Mass, we are changing that Mass time to 7:15 a.m.

Indeed, Lent is a time to step back and see how we are doing in our journey to Heaven. Thinking back to last year when we could not even gather as a parish, we must be grateful that progress is being made in returning to community prayer and worship. In collaboration with our Parish Council, our Liturgy Committee, and using the direction from the Diocese, here are some changes you will see in coming to church:

- The Entrance Procession (Father, Deacon, and servers) will again use the center aisle from the Narthex. Processions in our Church always remind us that we are a “pilgrim people,” always on the road to the Lord.
- Beginning on Palm Sunday, hymnals will again be available, so you can join in the hymns and Service music at Mass. Care will be taken so the hymnals spend a few days between uses in storage to avoid any possible contamination. To facilitate this, we ask that you pick up a hymnal when entering church and return it to the bin after Mass.
- We are welcoming servers back at Masses to assist me at the altar.
- The Diocese has determined that, at this time, we may have 50% capacity in church. Our Council reminds us that we must observe the 6-foot social distancing directive. Our church will welcome about 175 people at a time. Others beyond that number will be directed to the Parish Center, where they may attend Mass through live streaming. Holy Communion will be taken to those attending there.
- At NO time should you come to church if you are feeling ill. Follow the health care professionals’ advice in caring for yourself. You will be caring for others, as well.

Holy Week approaches. Many people find this the most spiritually enriching time of the year.

Palm Sunday: Masses will begin IN CHURCH, not the Parish Center. Take a palm When entering church. I will bless them in your hand at the beginning of Mass. The Entrance Procession reminds us of Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem only a few days before His Crucifixion. The palms are sacramental and can be displayed in your home throughout the year. Mass times: 4:30 p.m. Saturday; 8:00 & 10:00 a.m. Sunday.

Holy Thursday: This Mass recounts the Last Supper Jesus shared with His apostles. At that time He instituted the Eucharist and priesthood, the great Gifts which we Catholics cherish. This year we are directed to eliminate the washing of feet, whereby we are reminded that we are to take care of one another. In its place, as the bread and wine are presented at the Offertory, a symbolic offering of food for the needy will also be brought to the altar. At a future date, we will have a food drive as our way of acknowledging the command to love one another as He loves us. Mass time: 7:00 p.m. The church will remain open until 10:00 p.m. for prayer.

Good Friday: On this day we remember our Lord's sacrifice for us and His death on the cross. We read John's account of Christ's Passion. How haunting are the words we cry, "Crucify Him!"

Veneration of the Cross gives our souls an opportunity to acknowledge the cross as a sign of hope, not defeat. You may venerate the cross by genuflecting before it or bowing. Touching or kissing the cross, as we have been able to do in the past, will not be allowed. Time of Service: 12:15 p.m. The church will remain open for prayer until 4:00 p.m.

Holy Saturday: On this night, darkness gives way to the light of the Resurrection: the rich symbol of the New Fire – Christ our Light; the blessing of water reminds us of our entry into God's family through Baptism, welcoming new Christians into full communion. Mass time: 8:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday: Masses at 8:00 and 10:00 a.m.

All Masses will be live streamed and available on our parish website. Please check the website also for communication from the Bishop's Office regarding the vaccines.

I am looking forward to the days of Holy Week. To best prepare for them, our parish is offering the following additional times for Confession:

Sundays, 7:15-7:45 a.m. (before 8:00 a.m. Mass) – however, not on Palm Sunday

Wednesday, March 24, 6:30 p.m. There will be 2 additional priests to hear Confessions.

With prayer,

