



St. Paul Catholic Church

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March 13, 2020

Dear Parishioners of St. Paul:

*I am the good shepherd... I will lay down my life for my sheep ~
I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you.
(Jn 10:14f, 13:34)*

I must confess that until recently I thought that the alarming Corona Virus reports in the media were overly hyped. Lots of people enjoy the adrenalin surge that comes from being in a crisis, and of course, that's what drives eyeballs and clicks for the media providers. But now I've adjusted my mindset. I think the proper perspective is provided by Jesus's command to love as he loved, enough to lay down his own life for us. I look at the current efforts that have been announced to limit the spread of the virus as efforts to help keep other people safe. The focus is not so much on ourselves as on what we can do for others. I think as good Catholic Christians we are called to do whatever we can to keep others safe, even if it means some sacrifice on our part.

In that context we, the staff of St. Paul's, have spent considerable time thinking and discussing what we can do to help in this effort. I would like to share with you a number of initiatives that we have come up with.

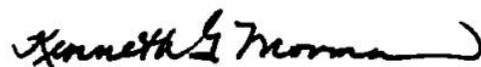
The foundation of our effort lies in the fact that this virus can survive on smooth surfaces for longer than other viruses and that people may be infected and shedding the virus before they are even aware that they are ill. Therefore, the goal becomes to avoid close personal contact with other people, especially in large numbers, where the odds grow much higher of inadvertent transmission.

1. Accordingly, as you know from the earlier communication today, Bishop Thomas, jointly with all the other bishops of Ohio, has announced that the faithful of the Diocese of Toledo are dispensed of their Sunday Obligation to attend Mass the next three weekends (March 15/15, March 21/22, March 28/29). At the same time, he has requested that at least initially we offer Masses at the usual times for those who are in good health and would still like to participate. We will do this at St. Paul.
 - a. We will follow the Diocesan guidelines to refrain from physical contact during the Kiss of Peace and invite everyone to express *verbally* to those around them their expressions of amity and unity.

- b. We will also follow those same guidelines in not offering the Holy Eucharist under the form of wine during these weeks. The whole Christ – body, blood, soul, and divinity – is received under either sign, so nothing will be lacking except that fuller sign of ratifying the covenant through the blood of Christ.
 - c. We will continue to offer communion on the tongue for those who desire it, but I would prayerfully ask those who are used to this form of piety to consider again the implications *for their brothers and sisters* – it’s very common in distributing communion in this manner to accidentally come in contact with a person’s tongue, and because there is no way to wipe one’s fingers, that saliva is then directly transferred to the next host, which goes into the next person’s mouth or hand. No amount of hand sanitizing before distribution can keep that direct transmission from occurring.
 2. In addition, we will try to sanitize the church as much as possible between services. But due to the number of our Masses, this will not always be possible to do as thoroughly as we would like. Therefore, at the entrances of the church will be hand sanitizers and disinfecting wipes. We encourage you to use them on your hands (*“gel in and gel out of church,”* one parish is phrasing it) and to sanitize with the wipes the pew area where you will be before Mass or other service.
 3. We also encourage you to utilize social distancing as you find and are seated in your pew these weeks. We assume that the smaller congregations will make this easier.
 4. As Bishop Thomas suggests, if you are not with us physically at Mass, we heartily encourage you to devote time to pray with us from home via our live webcast: Visit the parish website at stpaulchurch.org and click on the “Live Webcast” link at the bottom left of the home page. When it comes time for Communion, make a “Spiritual Communion”:
 - a. *Make an act of faith: Come up with your own prayer or use a traditional one to express to the Lord our faith in his real presence in the Eucharist.*
 - b. *Make an act of love – Say a prayer that expresses your love and gratitude to the Lord. Thank you for his infinite love as well.*
 - c. *Express your desire to receive him- As you are not able to physically receive the Lord, express your desire to receive Him in your heart.*
 - d. *Invite Jesus to come into your heart- With a humble and contrite heart we ask that Lord to come to us just as He would if we were able to receive the sacrament.*
- ~ Catholic Link
5. This is the kind of circumstance that shows how valuable online giving is to our parish – three weekends without a Sunday collection has the potential of being a serious problem! Maybe you won’t think it inappropriate if I would humbly suggest that in a parallel fashion, when we get to the collection during the live-streamed Mass you might want to click on the “Donate Online” button at the bottom of the home page of our parish website, <https://www.stpaulchurch.org/> ; we would be very grateful for that assistance!

6. This is a time when we need prayer more than ever. Lenten Evening Prayer will still take place on Wednesday evenings and Stations of the Cross on Friday evenings – the attendance at these devotions is always below the 100-person maximum gathering specified by the Governor that we try to respect, even if religious gatherings were explicitly excepted from that requirement. Note that they will also be live-streamed.
 - a. Also in keeping with his requirements, funerals will continue to be celebrated during this period of time; weddings and baptisms are not scheduled these weeks anyway because of Lent.
7. In addition, not only will our daily Masses be live-streamed, but the Staff gathers each workday morning to begin the day with the Church's Morning Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours at 8:30 am. During these weeks we will do that in the church so that it too will be live-streamed and those who wish to join us in that prayer may do so.
 - a. If you would wish to join in actively, download the **ibreviary** app to your phone.
8. For the duration of this situation we have been forced to curtail our ministry of bringing Holy Communion to the sick and shut-ins of our parish. By the Governor's order, all the nursing homes in our community are now closed to our Eucharistic Ministers bringing communion to them, and we do not wish to expose our shut-ins, the most vulnerable of our parishioners, to the possibility of inadvertent transmission of the virus.
 - a. For a similar reason we will be discontinuing our monthly Mass with the anointing of the sick on the first Thursdays for the duration of these restrictions. These good parishioners are by definition highly vulnerable to this virus.
 - b. However, if someone is dying, please call us priests in any case (419-668-6044) – we will administer the sacrament of the sick and offer the prayers for the dying regardless.
 - c. Note that confessions will still be heard in the church on the regular schedule as well.
9. Please keep connected with our parish through our parish website, email, and social media platforms (Facebook: St. Paul Roman-Catholic Church, Instagram: @stpaulamazing) during this unprecedented time; it seems as if new developments occur by the hour. And above all, let us pray for each other. The Lord does not save us individually but as members of his people; he told us, what we do for each other we do for him.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Msgr. Kenneth G. Morman
Pastor