

Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear friends,

We continue forward this week with new developments and news regarding the coronavirus. Globally, the World Health Organization has recognized this virus as a pandemic. Locally, in a press conference earlier this week Governor Inslee has issued an emergency proclamation limiting large gatherings of people in three counties – Snohomish, King, and Pierce counties.

### **Caring for the common good**

In light of these new limits and recognizing our responsibility to be proactive in caring for those most in need & take steps to slow down the spread of this virus, **Archbishop Etienne has suspended all public celebrations of the Mass.**

While this matches steps taken elsewhere in the world – Pope Francis himself is celebrating Mass with very few in attendance – it is nonetheless an extraordinary measure, touching on the very foundation of our life of faith. We do this out of love for our neighbor, safeguarding the common good of ourselves and those we care for – many of whom are especially vulnerable.

This will be a sacrificial offering of a different kind for us. While we priests may only offer Mass privately (ie, with no one in attendance), we carry your intentions at every celebration and your Spiritual Communion unites you to the prayer of the Mass.

### **Joining our prayers together across households & families**

Foremost, please be assured that as your pastor I continue to offer Mass each day for your intentions, pray for you in the Liturgy of the Hours, and remember you in my daily rosary. The staff and I, along with local technicians and experts, are exploring our options for streaming daily and Sunday Masses so that we might be able to pray together even from a distance. Please bear with us as we obtain and set up the necessary equipment & technology to make this possible.

While **the obligation to attend Sunday Mass is dispensed while these measures are in effect**, it is the duty of every Catholic to make Sunday holy to the best of their ability. I encourage you to pray along with the Mass as it is broadcast online, on television (EWTN), or via Sacred Heart Radio. Echoing the invitation Archbishop Etienne last week, please consider offering the rosary as a household, lifting up those most in need at this time.

While public Masses and parish gatherings are canceled, we will continue to have our church building open for prayer. Due to the inability to ensure the required six foot distance between those present, **the adoration chapel will be closed and the Eucharist will be exclusively reserved in the church. At the moment, we only have arrangements for the church to be open during the week from 9am to 4pm.** We are working on arrangements for weekends but won't have that sorted until next week.

### **Next steps for our parish and school**

Due to previously planned time away this week, weekday evening confession were already canceled yesterday, today, and tomorrow. **We will take the additional step of canceling Stations of the Cross this Friday and canceling Saturday confessions this weekend** while we sort out the new protocols set by King County for small gatherings (defined as less than 250 people). I anticipate that we will be

able to restore some limited offering of Stations of the Cross and confessions, but I ask for your patience as we make those arrangements.

Parents of our school children will have already received notice that we will be closing our school in sync with the closure of district schools. Shoreline has announced that they will be doing so through March 27<sup>th</sup>. Please see our parish school web site (link below) for a letter from our principal, Kathy Keck.

### **A final word of encouragement**

Providentially, I came across this passage of *Interior Freedom* by Jacques Philippe the morning of these latest developments – I found it encouraging and hope that you might too:

Our freedom always has this marvelous power to make what is taken from us - by life, events, or other people - into something offered. Externally there is no visible difference, but internally everything is transfigured: fate into free choice, constraint into love, loss into fruitfulness. Human freedom is of absolutely unheard-of greatness. It does not confer the power to change everything, but it does empower us to give a meaning to everything, even meaningless things; and that is much better. We are not always masters of the unfolding of our lives, but we can always be masters of the meaning we give them.

As we well know in these times, surrender to divine providence often comes at the cost of our own preferences and comfort! May we together choose to let the Master of lives – Who loves us each dearly – produce great graces for us and for all as we face these challenges with trust and faith.

Yours in Christ,  
Father Jacob Maurer

P.S. I am including below some resources that you may find helpful. As information and resources are passed on to us, we will forward them to you as well

P.P.S. **Please remember to continue your financial support of Saint Mark parish.** Though we will incur slightly reduced costs in utilities at the church & school buildings, our regular expenses remain – especially our staff (who remain working & responding on-site even while our offices are closed to visitors). Please visit our website for information about online giving and giving via text.

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### **Some useful resources for your consideration**

#### News & updates

Archdiocese of Seattle - <http://seattlearchdiocese.org/>

Saint Mark parish - <https://saintmarkshoreline.org/>

Saint Mark parish school - <https://www.stmss.org/>

#### Prayer & remote celebration of the Mass

Sacred Heart Radio - <https://sacredheartradio.org/> - AM 1050/FM 100.3

EWTVN - <https://www.ewtn.com/tv/watch-live> (also in some cable packages)

#### Streaming movies, Bible studies, and faith formation programs

FORMED - <https://formed.org/> - Free with our parish code: BREQZ9