

Frequently Asked Questions

about responding to COVID-19
as Catholics & members of Saint Mark parish

Week of March 15th, 2020

Dear friends,

As we enter our first full week of our new circumstances, I would like to take this opportunity to begin answering questions that many of you have raised. Because the key to making good decisions is ensuring that we are correctly informed, we are carefully considering our responses. Please know that any delay is primarily so that we can ensure that we are offering the latest and most accurate information.

I hope that this format will prove useful. We will do our best to provide updates like this with new information as we receive it, posting them online at our website (www.saintmarkshoreline.org) and on Facebook (www.facebook.com/saintmarkshoreline). Please also pass this on to those members of our community who may not have internet access.

Finally, let us all commend ourselves to prayer. Many of these questions have to do with material responses to this situation. This is important and I urge you to observe these responses carefully. May we also respond with faith! We have an opportunity to re-ignite our own faith and the faith of those around us. This is a time to pray, to reach out (remotely, of course) to those in our community, and to be fonts of grace to the world. Christ accomplished His greatest work on the cross – may we unite our sufferings and sacrifice to His!

Yours in Christ,
Father Maurer

How seriously should we take the coronavirus/COVID-19? Isn't this being blown out of proportion?

With our common experience of the annual cycle of flu season and having gone through the ups and downs of the swine flu, many have expressed skepticism that COVID-19 is really worthy of special attention. The temptation is to dismiss the virus and the precautions we are directed to take as simply being 'not that big of a deal'.

In fact, COVID-19 is a big deal. Not because it is necessarily deadly – quite the opposite, in fact. But there are several factors that require a more serious response. COVID-19 can pass from person-to-person without the individual carrier displaying symptoms or feeling ill at the time. This makes it particularly hard to track before someone is already sick, endangering those who are at higher risk (older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions). Even a person who feels fine or is young and healthy should take steps to avoid inadvertently passing on the virus. Taking precautions is our first and best step to caring for each other.

What can we do to respond appropriately?

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has a dedicated web page to offer guidance in proactive measures and what to do if an individual thinks they might be sick. We can all educate ourselves on the facts and best practices as they continue to develop.

Individual personal hygiene is also critical. Please see the CDC's guidelines on careful personal hygiene at home and when you are with others. 'Social distancing' has become the theme of many press releases and official statements. It means staying home as much as possible – leaving only when necessary and maintaining at least six feet between individuals if that necessity arises.

As one commentator online opined: if your confessor had told you that for your penance, you had to stay home, watch Netflix/Amazon/Hulu, and pass time with your loved ones AND that doing so would save lives, you might have thought that you had hit the jackpot!

What should we do if we think we have been exposed or feel sick?

Since we know that COVID-19 can be transmitted even before we may begin to feel sick or display symptoms, the proper response to potential exposure is self-quarantine. The CDC's dedicated webpage has detailed instructions on steps you should take, monitoring symptoms, and how to decide when home isolation can be discontinued.

How can we prepare?

Staying informed is a key element. In addition to the CDC and parish websites, your local health department website will have helpful information as well. Since most of our parishioners are from King or Snohomish county, we are including those websites at the end of this document.

The CDC recommends having a communication plan with our family and friends as well as having about two weeks of necessary supplies (food, medications, essentials). While stockpiling supplies may seem appealing, we should be especially mindful of only buying what we need.

What about Sunday Masses and other parish events?

Out of an abundance of caution and following the emergency proclamation made by Governor Inslee on March 11th, 2020, Archbishop Etienne immediately suspended all public Masses. Since that time, the Archbishop has issued additional guidance.

Because it is not possible to attend Sunday Mass, all Catholics are dispensed from their Sunday obligation. However, the Church strongly recommends that when Sunday Mass can not be attended, we devote ourselves to prayer, especially as a family. (Code of Canon Law, 1248 §2)

Does this mean that Masses are canceled altogether?

Although Masses are not being celebrated publicly, Mass is being offered every single day by your priests around the archdiocese. Daily Mass intentions at Saint Mark parish are being honored as they have been scheduled. Sunday Mass is offered *pro populo* or 'for the people of the parish'. The sacrifice of the Mass continues and your prayers are offered with it.

Will the church re-open? If so, what will we be able to do?

We're working diligently to have the church cleaned carefully. **When we can open it to the community, we will post updates online and via e-mail.** Gatherings will follow the guidelines and restrictions given to us by our state, county, and archbishop.

What about confessions?

Due to a confirmed case of COVID-19 at Saint Mark parish, we are closed for cleaning. This will take some time to arrange and implement. During that time, we can not use the church building. Similarly, we must isolate the office building so that staff can continue working without concern of potential exposure. We are currently exploring what options may be available, particularly aware of the need to create a space that safeguards both individual health and the integrity of the sacrament. **We will post updates online and via e-mail when opportunities for confession are available.**

What do I do if I am in mortal sin and confession is not possible?

We are always required to confess mortal sin, which begins with our contrition – our sorrow for sin and resolution not to sin again. When that contrition arises from love of God rather than shame or fear of punishment, it is called perfect or contrition of charity. Such contrition remits venial sins and even obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1452)

As we know, this is often quite difficult to do! We feel contrite for a variety of reasons, that often include imperfect motivations as well as a desire to love God. In these circumstances, we are called to pray for perfect contrition, offering our sorrow and repentance to the best of our ability – and to trust in the God who desires always to show us His mercy and love.

What about emergencies involving death & dying? Will a priest come?

Absolutely, yes. We are dedicated to offering sacramental support, especially in the face of grave illness or danger of death! If you or a loved one is facing serious illness – especially involving hospitalization or danger of death – please don't hesitate to call the parish.

Can the Church still do funerals, weddings, and baptisms?

At this time, we are permitted to have very small gatherings, as dictated by state restrictions. Funerals, weddings, and baptisms will be limited to immediate family and godparents (for baptism).

When will we be able to return to normal? How long will this last?

We don't know. The situation continues to develop not only in our state but across the country. The most recent guidance suggests that we may be in for several weeks and perhaps months of heightened care and precautions. While we maintain hope for a swift turn-around, we should prepare ourselves to adapt our family and faith life for an extended period.

How can we pray together as a parish remotely during this time?

We are blessed to have a great deal of technology at our disposal! We are currently streaming Mass live every single day on Facebook. We are looking into live streaming other prayers together,

especially the rosary and Eucharistic adoration. Please visit the parish Facebook page for details and developments.

Is there anything we can do to support the parish and staff?

So many have very generously reached out to offer encouragement to our staff and faculty. Those little gestures make a huge difference – please continue in praying for and supporting our parish and school employees. Your patience and kindness are a welcome balm!

Because Masses are not being offered publicly, we don't have the opportunity for offertory collections. But our general expenses continue. Utilities and payroll are our most significant expenses, and they allow us to offer service and support to you even in these times. Please make sure that your weekly donations make it to the parish! *It would be especially helpful if you converted to online donations or donations by text* (see link below), as this would minimize person-to-person contact and reduce the manual workload of the staff. Please visit our parish web page and click the online giving link for more information on how to set that up.

Resources

Important COVID-19 information

- CDC (Center for Disease Control): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Washington State Novel Coronavirus Fact Sheet (multilingual): <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/FactSheet>
- Washington State Department of Health: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus>
- News releases from Governor Jay Inslee: <https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/news-media>
- King County Public Health: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/communicable-diseases/disease-control/novel-coronavirus.aspx>
- Snohomish County Health District: <https://www.snohd.org/484/Novel-Coronavirus-2019>

Parish & archdiocesan information

- Saint Mark parish: <http://saintmarkshoreline.org/>
 - o on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SaintMarkShoreline/>
 - o Online giving: <https://www.osvonlinegiving.com/149/DirectDonate/2104>
- Saint Mark parish school: <https://www.stmss.org/>
 - o on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/stmarkschoolwa>
 - o on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/stmarkshoreline/>
- Archdiocese of Seattle: <http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/>
- Archbishop Etienne: <https://www.archbishopetienne.com/>
 - o on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/AbpEtienne>
 - o on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ArchbishopEtienne/>
- Father Maurer: <http://fathermaurer.com/>
 - o on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/fathermaurer>

Personal or family prayer

- Magnificat online: <https://us.magnificat.net/free>
- iBreviary (available online and via apps): <http://www.ibreviary.org/en/>
- Word Among Us: <https://wau.org/>
- Give Us This Day: <https://giveusthisday.org/>
- Formed (online Catholic videos): <https://formed.org>
 - o Free with our parish code: BREQZ9
- Sacred Heart Radio: <https://sacredheartradio.org/> - AM 1050/FM 100.3
- EWTN: <https://www.ewtn.com/tv/watch-live>
 - o Also included in some cable packages
- Archdiocesan 'Faith at Home' guide: <http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/Assets/General/At-Home-with-Faith-Resource.pdf>
- 'Thy Kingdom Come' collection of prayers: <https://saintmarkshoreline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Thy-Kingdom-Come-Prayer-Book-Proof.pdf>

- Live streamed perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
 - o Dominican Monastery (Italy): <https://www.facebook.com/www.monasterodomenicane.org/videos/239153080573540/>
 - o Tyburn Convent (London): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WclRtNhMFPc>



Our Lady of Seattle, St. James Cathedral/Photo: Archbishop Paul D. Etienne

Holy Mary, we come before you as spiritual children in great need, seeking your intercession, and asking that your mantle of love surround us to console, protect, and lead us to your son Jesus.

We entrust all of God's family, especially the church in Western Washington, into your immaculate hands. With your son Jesus' gentle power you can *undo any knot* in our church, and in the lives of believers who entrust themselves to your care.

Today I especially entrust to you [*mention request/ Coronavirus here*], and I ask that — through your intercession, and that of St. James, our guardian angels, and the faithful in our archdiocese — we may be free from every spiritual and temporal ill, and be safely led to encounter your son's merciful, sacred heart.

Our Lady of Seattle, Undoer of Knots, pray for us!