

Never Isolated in Christ

YOUR ~~WEEKLY~~ DAILY(?) CORONAVIRUS UPDATE FROM ASSUMPTION PARISH
MARCH 26, 2020

*For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel:
By waiting and by calm you shall be saved,
in quiet and in trust shall be your strength.*

*Truly, the LORD is waiting to be gracious to you,
truly, he shall rise to show you mercy;
For the LORD is a God of justice:
happy are all who wait for him!*

-Isaiah 30:15, 18

Pastor's Note

Dear Assumption Parishioners,

I did not expect to be writing to you again so soon, but only hours after we sent out my weekend letter, Governor Inslee enacted a legally binding "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order that has forced a change even in our already pared down services. This letter explains what has changed and where we go from here. I will provide more *pastoral* resources in the letter planned for Monday.

I am sorry it has taken me so long to get these important changes out to you. Thank you for your patience with us!

You are ever in my heart and in my prayers,

J. Moore

Immediate Effect of the Order

The immediate effect of the order is that **all parish activities are now suspended**. We are no longer allowed to offer any scheduled events, including exposition of the Blessed Sacrament or confessions. As a rule, **no one is allowed on campus**, except for Karen Zuther and Ted Cronk, who will be carrying out essential services like collecting our mail, paying our bills, and making sure our buildings stay operational. Oh, and me, *because I live here*.

Some information on specific questions follows.

New Streaming Schedule

Because I still want people to be able to pray with the Eucharist, even if they cannot be physically present, I will now be streaming an hour of exposition along with all of my streaming Masses. The new schedule is as follows:

- **Monday – Friday:** Mass at 9:00 a.m., exposition following
- **Saturday:** Exposition at 3:50 p.m., Mass at 5:00 p.m.
- **Sunday:** Exposition at 11:20 a.m., Spanish Mass at 12:30 p.m.

Please note, **the times for Sunday Mass have changed**. We originally planned the weekend liturgies so that they could be celebrate around convenient periods of adoration. However, now that we are no longer offering exposition, I am moving the weekend liturgies to previous scheduled Mass times, so that families can continue the habit of attending Mass at their normal Mass times. We are doing the English Mass at 5:00 p.m. so that 8:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. Mass goers will already have a recording ready and available.

Please Pray at Home, not at Church

Even though we can no longer schedule exposition (as this constitutes an “event,” which is banned), the Archdiocese still left us the option to keep our church open for private prayer. They actually encouraged it, as no one wants to have to say that our churches are “closed” at exactly the time when we need them most.

However, after consultation with our staff, and previous consultation with our budding Security Committee, I determined that Assumption will not be able to be open for public prayer while “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” is in effect.

The primary reason for this is because we are very close to downtown and the Lighthouse Mission drop-in center (which has temporarily relocated to Bellingham High School), and we are very susceptible to folks acting out from a mental health crisis. As much as we feel called to serve the poor and the marginalized, we do not feel that keep our church open for long hours while no one is around is a wise choice, both for the safety of the building and for the safety of any parishioner who might end up praying in there alone. In fact, this is *exactly* why we spent a week only offering three hours of exposition each day: that seemed to be the sweet spot where we could ensure that we had enough people to feel safe but few enough to stay healthy. With no exposition, we do not believe we can create that environment.

In addition, if a church is open, the Archdiocese is requiring that there be a staff or volunteer there at all times, enforcing social distancing and sanitizing anything that gets touched. This expectation seemed too unrealistic to support.

Weddings and Funerals Delayed

Unfortunately, as long as this order is in effect, we cannot celebrate any weddings or funerals. We are already in contact with upcoming weddings. But if your family experiences a death and requires a funeral, please know that we will pray with you and support you as best as we can, but the Mass for the deceased will have to occur at a later time.

Anointings and Confessions only for the Dying

As essential as Confession and the Anointing of the Sick is for our spiritual wellbeing, at this time we have to restrict these sacraments to those who are dying. The reason is that these sacraments **must** be performed in person, and in order to ensure that Fr. Moore is healthy enough to minister to the dying, he has to reserve his limited in-person ministerial visits for those grave cases.

Priest Availability

Despite everything above, it is important to the Archbishop and to Fr. Moore that our parishioners know that we are still doing everything we can to serve them and accompany them. Fr. Moore continues to check his e-mail regularly and continues to schedule telephone meetings when necessary. You are not alone, and we are dedicated to meeting your spiritual needs as best as we can during this extraordinary time.

No Public Holy Week or Easter

It breaks our hearts to have to let you know that, even if the “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order is lifted by then, Holy Week and Easter will not be public liturgies, for the first time in the history of our country. It seems wrong that the holiest days of our liturgical year should have to be celebrated in isolation, but please know we are doing everything we can to ensure that our people will be able to participate in these rich liturgies, even from their own homes.

Some Notes on Facebook Access

Our parish survey from the last letter revealed that there is still some confusion about accessing the streaming Masses using Facebook live.

Please know that **you do not need a Facebook account to access these Masses**. The Masses are hosted on Fr. Moore's public Facebook page, which does not require a log in. Facebook may prompt you to log in, but you can close that window and still continue on to the page with all of the Masses.