

Monday March 16 communication on the COVID19 situation from Fr. Michael Joly to all St. Joan of Arc Parish family:

You and the spiritual needs of your family are my first priority as Pastor of your Parish. The current environment of precaution, given the COVID19 strand of the Corona Virus, presents us with Federal, State, and Local mandates with which the Diocese of Richmond is fully complying in order to minimize the rate of contamination and to bring all back to a healthier "normal" as soon as possible.

The following changes and interruptions to the vibrant spiritual life at your Parish are temporary and call us to go even "deeper" into the desert of Lent. There are going to be deprivations which make us even more hungry spiritually, and hopefully will bring about a greater love of the Lord and His gifts in our lives and even in the lives of so many who have forgotten His powerful and beautiful mercy.

At the direction of the Bishop of Richmond, the celebration of all public Masses (Sundays, Holydays, weekdays) are immediately suspended. All the faithful are dispensed from the obligation but are called to meet the Lord Jesus in a true "Spiritual Communion" by intention. All public devotions such as Stations of the Cross and Morning Prayer are also suspended. Any impromptu gatherings may not exceed 50 persons. All unnecessary gatherings are also to cease.

I and both of our outstanding Deacons will absolutely ensure that we respond to needs for the Sacraments to be brought to the sick. Confessions will also be offered at the Parish with a modified schedule to accommodate more of the need and desire. The Sacraments of First Penance and First Holy Communion have been postponed for now but will definitely be waiting for your children as soon as this threat lifts. In addition, the Sacrament of Confirmation scheduled to be celebrated two days from now at St. Bede has also been canceled, but the Holy Spirit never disappoints. The beautiful and miraculous Sacrament of the Holy Spirit will definitely be granted to your sons and daughters as soon as possible. We will keep you well informed.

So what does this mean for our Catholic identity and spiritual core? What is perhaps sad but true is that the hungers for Christ that have been so massively denied or replaced in our modern time can now revive and even thrive through this time of deprivation. It is possible that the dry desert, which has resulted from the beauty of the original Garden drying up, now meets a springtime of intense prayer, penance, and hopeful waiting for the

Resurrection. All of the faithful are challenged to step up and to do what it takes with true intention and resolve:

Carve out the time and use your will to enter into personal devotions during this time. Deacon Mark is doing a great job getting daily materials to folks. If you are not receiving them, please call the office: 757-898-5570.

The Church building will be open during regular business hours (8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) for personal prayer, Stations, Rosary, devotions, and time with our Lord in the Sacrament.

Online formation will be secured by Jen Sanders for all of our children and youth in our faith formation program. They, with their families, have a real opportunity to go deeper and to never take the beauty and depth of the fullness of our faith for granted. Deacon Mark will continue to inspire all folks in the RCIA process on their road into full initiation in the Catholic faith. All are encouraged to make use of your beautifully renovated worship space which will be open for your use until this extraordinary time passes.

Our youth, who are so essential for the success of Christ in the world, must see this time as a great challenge to be met! Being from such a military Parish, we are familiar with our friends and family members who have served in “Special Ops” roles. This requires intense resolve and a deep refusal NOT TO DECAY in the face of discouragement. Our Youth Minister, Brandon Allaman, is here to engage all youth to remain personally growing in the Lord.

Our Music Ministry has a tremendous leader at the helm. Liam Lees will be using audio transmissions and internet and phone communication to bring all voices together, even if not in the same space for now.

Cherry Macabbabad is our joyful and helpful voice on the line whenever anyone calls the Parish. She is here to receive your calls or emails with any concerns or needs you may have, or even to receive any good news you could share with us.

Gina Baird is our Bookkeeper and Human Resource rep in the office. She is making sure that all communication regarding staff and finances are being addressed.

Christine Ladnier is our Ministerial Assistant in the office and also a trained Catholic spiritual director. Chris is available by appointment in person or on the phone as you may need.

And, Deacon Jim is fully dedicated to the life and worship of the entire Parish. He and Deacon Mark are on call whenever needed. Parish office hours will remain as usual for the time being. If any changes to the hours occur, we will inform you. Also, I, Fr. Michael, will be offering Private Holy Mass daily for your intentions and for God's will to be done through the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Lastly, all of our faithful who worship and sacrifice every Lord's Day in the offertory at Holy Mass are asked prayerfully to do one of the following with our sacrificial giving until this is cleared up:

1. Please, place your sacrificial offering in the locked votive candle box at the Tabernacle while also lighting a candle with your intentions,
2. Please, place your sacrificial offering along with your spiritual intentions in the locked poor box secured in the wall to the left of the main wooden doors as you enter in the church worship space,
3. Please, mail in to the office your sacrificial offering with your spiritual intention,
4. Please, visit the office personally with a smile and a personal greeting to offer your spiritual offering and the needed gift of your presence.

Of course, the High Holy Days of Holy Week approach with Passion Sunday on April 5. However, our Holy Week has, in a true sense, arrived early and will last much longer than one week. It may seem that the tomb around us lasts longer than three days. But, be assured of this as we pray for all people physically afflicted by this virus and for all of the spiritually distant and ill: know that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that, Risen from the dead, Christ is with us.

Prayerfully yours,

Fr. Michael Joly

Prayer for a Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.