



Saint MARY PARISH

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JMJ

05-30-2020, Vigil of Pentecost

Dear Parishioners,

It is with great joy and a sense of great gratitude for the gift of each one of you and Our Lord's Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist, that I share with you that we have been given the green light by the State of Washington and the Archdiocese of Seattle to prepare to re-open our Churches for public Masses in the month of June. By now you have seen the statement from the WSCC, the Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Washington State, on re-opening our Churches for Masses as early as this weekend, Pentecost Sunday.

*After much prayer and consultation, I have decided to **not** hold public Masses this weekend, though we all long for a return to the communal celebration and reception of the Holy Eucharist as soon as possible. Instead, we will have our regular live-streaming of the extended Pentecost Vigil Mass and will repeat on Sunday at noon our experience of Drive-In Adoration ("Park 'n' Pray") which will be our Pentecost Healing Service. Attendance at Drive-In Adoration will be limited to 100 persons, and you will not be allowed to exit your vehicle for any reason whatsoever! If you intend to roll down your window, please wear a mask.*

As much as we long for Christ's Presence in the Sacraments and in one another, *we cannot risk rushing this careful re-opening process* and none of us wants our beloved parish to become the center of the outbreak and the occasion of sickness and death. There are *many* safeguards that are now being put in place by the Archdiocese and the State to ensure that everyone stays safe and no one gets sick.

This weekend, seven parishes around the Archdiocese of Seattle, including St. James Cathedral in Seattle and Assumption Parish in Bellingham have been approved by the Archdiocese for outdoor Mass for a limited number of people. Seating is by ticket only. We will benefit from the experience of these parishes in the coming weeks, along with continual updates from the Archdiocese and the State.

This afternoon, members of our new COVID-19 Team for St. Mary Parish are meeting (on Zoom of course!) to discuss how to best and most efficiently proceed with the re-opening process. Our initial plan is to have a couple of Masses that are "practice-runs" for liturgical ministers only, under the revised regulatory guidance, before opening up to the parish at large. The exact date of our first public Mass since March 1st is unknown at this time and will be decided by me when our COVID-19 Team tells me that we are ready and our new safety plan has been approved by the Archdiocese of Seattle. The Parish Office remains closed until further notice.

*What is very important for everyone to know, as I've said before, is that this will **not** be a "grand re-opening" as happens for a grocery store or retail outlet. **Many things** are going to have to **change** about our **behavior** when we come to Church and our **customs** when we worship and receive the Sacraments, for the duration of this pandemic. Those who have had the opportunity to visit the Church for private prayer during the week have experienced some of this, *but you need to know that there is more change on the way.* In the coming week, you will be receiving more information about these changes and how we will be able to participate again in the Sacred Liturgy, the source and summit of our Catholic Life! **Thank you** for your fervent prayers in these days!*

With every prayer and good wish in the Holy Spirit, Spouse of Mary, I remain, your Pastor,

- Fr. Straz