

May 13, 2020

Wednesday Update #9

Dear Fellow Parishioners:

As many of you know, we have received the "Good News." The announcement from the Diocese office was released on Monday evening stating that we could begin the process of reopening the church for prayer and services. Please be sure to have read that announcement as there is much detail in it that I am not able to restate here. Most importantly there is much that we are working on at St. Helen to comply with the announcement relative to our circumstances. St. Helen is a large parish with the procedures adapted to our situation. Have no doubt that the spiritual wellbeing of all of our parishioners is of the greatest concern, yet we would be foolish to not also be concerned with the proper care and procedures regarding the health and care of all who physically attend services. Clearly, we have been and remain in "new territory." We ask that you please let us know in the office your concerns and issues at the same time we will comply with the direction provided from the Bishop.

Here is our weekly update:

1. Masses. Weekday masses will resume at St. Helen on Monday, 5/25. Weekend masses will resume on Saturday, 5/30 and Sunday 5/31, the Feast of Pentecost. We have not yet finalized procedures. Please be aware that due to social distancing seating in the church is going to be severely limited. We do not plan at this time to require masks, but social distancing will be mandatory. Procedures to "cleanse" pews between masses are being developed so that those arriving for the next mass during the week or on the weekend may be delayed from entering the church. All are reminded that the Bishop has continued the dispensation for attending Sunday mass. St. Helen will also continue to have on the internet one of our weekend masses. We will be issuing a statement next week with all the specific procedures we are implementing at St. Helen. We ask your patience and cooperation as we work to protect all that are attending while not impacting the sacredness of our active participation. No doubt we will refine and change procedures to accommodate your safety and changing circumstances. There will be information next week as well regarding funerals, weddings, and the confession schedule.
2. Please continue to view the presentations on Face Book, YouTube, and our web site. There is an excellent presentation on our honoring our Blessed Mother Mary during this month of May.
3. Outreach Services continue to serve those in need at our two locations. Our Outreach Office on 18th Street is pretty much back to normal hours. The outpouring of food and donations from the parish has been exceptional. Please continue as the need and our call to serve the poor is great.
4. On the property:
 - a. Religious Education is returning on site in mid-June.
 - b. The improvements required by the Fire Department to the stage in the Parish Hall are mostly complete. We are planning on renovating the bathrooms in that building next.
5. The St. Helen Centennial Book is available to be picked up at the church office any day between 9am-4pm.
6. At present the office is remaining closed for outside traffic. Staff is available in the office from 9am-4pm to assist as best as possible. It is likely that we will reopen the office by the end of the month.

7. The parish finance committee completed its quarterly meeting last Monday electronically. The church operations are showing a loss because of the lower offertory due to the pandemic. Expenses are also reduced. With the offertory increasing slowly back closer to better levels, it appears that the ultimate loss will be accommodated using some savings. We continue to encourage the use of online giving as it provides a safe and secure manner of handling funds.

The experience of this pandemic is unique. The suffering has and will continue to be felt throughout our families, community and elsewhere. Some during this time may have suffered little and others have lost loved ones. It is imperative that we pray our way in, through and out of this pandemic. It is in the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic church that we find our direction. I offer a prayer from St. Ignatius of Loyola

Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous; teach me to serve You as You deserve; to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for reward save that of knowing I am doing Your Will. Amen

Let us also pray daily the Memorare Prayer for ourselves, our families, those who are suffering at this time and especially for those who have no one else to pray for them:

REMEMBER, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly to thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother; to thee do I come; before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Your Brother in Christ,

Deacon dave