13 May 2020

Dear Faithful of the Oratory of Ss. Gregory and Augustine,

My normal Tuesday exhortation is coming to you on Wednesday because time was needed to discuss the best practices for the Oratory as we prepare to resume the celebration of public Masses this coming Monday, 18 May 2020 @ 12:15 pm. I am overjoyed that this is happening, but also aware that there is still the specter of COVID-19 and the precautions that are being advised by state and local governments along with the mandates required by the Archdiocese of Saint Louis.

At the outset it must be clearly stated that those who are sick, in any way, should not come to Church for any reason whatsoever. This is non-negotiable, especially if you fall into a category that makes you more vulnerable to the possibility of contracting the virus: those over the age of 60 and/or those suffering from underlying health issues. I am aware that on the part of many will be the desire to come to Church and to hopefully receive Holy Communion. If, however, you are not well then you should stay home for your well-being and that of those with whom you would be praying. The Archbishop has extended the dispensation for the Sunday celebration of Holy Mass. So those who would be rightly concerned about fulfilling their obligation do not need to have that concern.

Along with this letter there are two documents from the Archdiocese of Saint Louis that spell out guidelines for the celebration of public Masses and some frequently asked questions. I encourage you to read these documents because it provides some important information about health, safety, and how we move forward with publicly celebrating the sacraments. You will notice as you read these documents that there are elements in the documents that do not apply to the Oratory of Ss. Gregory and Augustine because these are not practices that are a part of our celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

With all this information present I would like to address several items that will be particular to our community:

1. The guidelines state that Churches under 10,000 sq. feet should function at only 25% capacity. For the Oratory and the physical space of Saint Luke the Evangelist that means practically that we will only be able to accommodate 150 at any celebration of Holy Mass. This does not impact us for weekday Masses but will do so for Sunday Masses.
2. **ADDITIONAL HOLY MASS: In order to provide everyone an opportunity to be present at Holy Mass on Sunday I will be adding an additional Holy Mass at 6:45 am**. **This will begin on Sunday, 24 May 2020.** The 8:00 am and the 11:30 will continue as normal. At the 6:45 am and 8:00 am Low Masses there will be no homily given. At the 11:30 am High Mass a brief homily will be given. At this juncture, I am asking the faithful to consider being present for the 6:45 am Low Mass so that we will be able to keep social distancing and all be present for Holy Mass. Also, at this time, there will be no sign-up sheet for Mass. However, if we arrive at the situation where there are more people at 8:00 am or 11:30 am it could necessitate people signing-up prior to Sunday Mass and once a Mass time is filled with the allotted number of parishioners you would have the opportunity for a second or third choice. Again, at this time I am relying upon the faithful to spread themselves out over the three (3) Holy Masses available.
3. **CONFESSIONS:** With the introduction of a third Mass on Sundays, confessions will not be available on Sunday Morning. I have added Mondays from 11 am until 12 Noon for confessions in addition to Wednesday evenings beginning at 5:00 pm and Fridays from 11 am until 12 Noon.
4. **PEWS:** In order to keep social distance, everyone is asked to keep a pew between you and the people in front and behind you. The pews in which you are able to sit will be designated accordingly. Families are able and encouraged to sit together. If there is more than one family per pew please sit on the ends of the aisle and leave space for social distance.
5. **ENTERING/EXITING CHURCH:** At the entrance of each door to the Church there will be hand sanitizer to be used upon entering and exiting the Church. As you enter and exit do not congregate near the doors, and please do not congregate on the parking lots.
6. **COLLECTIONS:** a collection will be taken-up during Holy Mass in the normal manner. There will be a need for ushers at the 6:45 am Holy Mass. If you anticipate being present for Holy Mass at 6:45 am and would be willing to assist with taking up the collection, please contact me at the rectory ([msgrmorris@gmail.com](mailto:msgrmorris@gmail.com)) or 314/925-8989. Everyone is encouraged to give online (there is information about how to do so in the bulletin).
7. **BATHROOM:** Recognizing that we have one bathroom in the back, if you are waiting for the bathroom, please be mindful to not only keep a safe distance but to also leave room near that entrance/exit so that those coming into the Church will be able to safely enter.
8. **HOLY COMMUNION:** Holy communion will be distributed at the rail in the normal manner for the Oratory of Ss. Gregory and Augustine. As you approach the rail you are free to keep distant from those around you. This might increase the time for the distribution of Holy Communion and everyone is asked to be patient. Also, as you line up for Holy Communion please keep appropriate distance from one another.
9. The Archdiocese provided the following information as a good reminder for us all: *Catholics who attend Holy Mass are not required to receive Holy Communion more than once per year. No one is under any obligation to receive nor distribute Holy Communion. Catholics who choose to temporarily refrain from receiving Holy Communion may make an act of Spiritual Communion, uniting themselves worthily to our Lord’s true presence in the Most Holy Eucharist through prayer*.
10. **RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION:** Everyone is reminded that if you are comfortable approaching the rail for Holy Communion or the manner in which Holy Communion will be distributed you are free to remain in the pew and make a spiritual communion. It has been forgotten that the obligation is to attend Holy Mass, not to necessarily receive Holy Communion. There is grace through our presence and participation at Holy Mass, not only in the act of receiving Holy Communion.
11. **MISSALS:** We are asked to refrain from using the missals in the pews. I encourage those who do not have their own missal to download the Sunday readings and Collects and bring that with you for Holy Mass if you need it.
12. So too, we are encouraged to wipe down the pews, doors, and public areas after each Mass. The sealant/disinfectant that is being applied to all surfaces in church (by an outside company) stays active on all surfaces for two weeks; they recommend using a dry cloth to wipe down all surfaces after each Mass. If you are able and willing to assist with this after the Holy Mass you attend, please contact me ([msgrmorris@gmail.com](mailto:msgrmorris@gmail.com)) or Donna ([osgaoffice@gmail.com](mailto:osgaoffice@gmail.com)) and let us know.
13. **GATHERINGS:** We will continue to limit all social gatherings; so there will be no coffee and donuts until further notice; the Knights of Columbus will not meet as well
14. **OTHER SACRAMENTS:** For those families who are anticipating Confirmation and First Holy Communion it is anticipated that these will happen in July. First Holy Communion will happen at a separate Mass, not on Sunday, in order to allow more family members of the 1st communicants to be present. The reception of baptism is still taking place. Please contact the rectory in order to arrange baptism.
15. **THE NEW MASS AND CONFESSION SCHEDULE IS:**

**Holy Mass:**

* Monday & Friday @ 12:15 pm
* Tuesday & Thursday @ 7:00 am
* Wednesday @ 6:30 pm
* Sunday @ 6:45 am, 8:00 am and 11:30 am

**Confessions:**

* Monday & Friday from 11 am until 12 Noon
* Wednesday from 5:00 pm until 6:00 pm

This is a great deal of information to process all at once. I am convinced that prayer and common sense will greatly assist us going forward. Likewise, we will need to be patient with the processes as they unfold and to be patient with each other. As always let us call upon the intercession of Our Lady of Walsingham to intercede for us. The power of the mediation of the Blessed Virgin should never be doubted and the daily recitation of the Most Holy Rosary is one of our greatest weapons in times of difficulty. Our Mother will assist us; all we need to do is call on to Her and She will answer our prayers.

In the Risen Christ,

Msgr. Morris