



ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY

OUR MOTHER OF SORROWS

ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX

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6 August 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As your Pastor, I write for this fourth time to keep you updated.

Health and Wellbeing

Several parishioners and their families have been directly impacted by the corona virus (Covid-19). As with the disease in general, this ranges among parishioners from mild symptoms to long-term and sometimes chronic health issues, and even death. This is not the flu. I encourage you to look after your health and express your love of neighbor by appropriately socially distancing, wearing a mask in public settings and washing or sanitizing your hands. Keep praying!

I also want to make note of the emotional impact. The last few months have been exhausting, at least for me. Psychologists refer to "decision exhaustion." Once upon a time, we could decide to have meatloaf for dinner and simply stop to get some hamburger. Now, we have to decide if we want to enter the store, remember to wear our mask, have to think about wiping down cart handles, and whether or not we're social distancing while we shop and check-out. One friend compared it to how stressful driving was for her at the age of sixteen as opposed to when it became more of a natural reflex. Experts offer suggestions as to how to stay emotionally healthy, including a regular sleep schedule, maintaining personal hygiene, eating healthy meals at regular times, allocating time for working (even on chores) and time for resting.

Any number of people have also been affected by the economic impact of this pandemic, from parishioners finding themselves unemployed or wondering how to keep their family-owned business afloat. As with physical health, do what you can to look after yourselves and your neighbors. A pot of chili or spaghetti can go a long way for someone who isn't sure what the future holds. If you need financial assistance, please let us know. We will do what we can to assist parishioners, especially with mortgage payments, prescriptions, utilities or food.

Public Worship

As always, let me begin by reminding you that **the Archbishop of Louisville has extended the dispensation for the Sunday obligation indefinitely**. In other words, you are not obliged to attend Mass on Sundays. The "opening" of the churches for public celebrations is for your convenience and devotion. If you want to attend Mass, you may - with certain safety measures in place - but you do not have to attend Mass. If age or health of yourself or family members would urge caution, I encourage you to stay "healthy at home."

The number of those attending Mass is growing slowly. It ranges from about 25-70 people depending on the day and the Mass. And, people are being very good about abiding by our social distancing efforts - from using hand sanitizers and wearing masks, to using our six-foot guides to distance households. I am very grateful for

your cooperation. At the same time, we want these numbers to remain limited, as social distancing limits seating capacity. In terms of people viewing our live-stream Masses, the numbers are greater. Over the course of a weekend, some 1,000 people will view our five posted Masses.

Praying with Others, While at Home

As a Christian, it is essential to have both a personal prayer life and a communal prayer life. Thus, your personal prayer life is very important. As your Pastor, I also understand that, during this pandemic, we feel a natural sense of loss by not being able to gather in the normal way. To help parishioners maintain some connection to the community, while remaining at home, we've taken a number of steps. We're going to have a "new normal" for a while. As always, I remind you that plans are tentative; things can change, depending on civil and ecclesiastical authorities. We have to be flexible in difficult times, and parishioners have been amazingly patient, cooperative and generous.

General Observations

Live-streaming Masses pose some technical difficulties. Probably the biggest factor is that we're not operating on professional equipment or in spaces designed as recording studios. We're using our personal phones in large, echoing churches. Comments on the live-stream can be helpful, but please realize that, once the Mass is recording, we do not stop it or interrupt it. If you comment on the live-stream during the Mass (e.g., something is wrong with the sound), we will not see it until the Mass has ended.

Let me offer some public recognition to John Brown who was very helpful in getting us started and to Paul Moon, who has become our primary cameraman for weekdays and Saturdays, and Joe Nitzken who often serves for the 9 AM, Jeff Korfhage at the 10:30, and Rusty Raque at the 7 PM. Over the last few weeks, Paul Moon has been experimenting with inexpensive microphones for the phone-cameras.

Homebound parishioners are unable to go to doctor's appointments or for groceries without assistance from family or friends. If you are homebound, please let us know at the parish office. As before the pandemic, we will strive to connect you to someone who is attending Mass, who can bring you Holy Communion on a regular basis.

Minor Changes to the Covid Outreach

We are now live-streaming the Masses through the Pax Christi Facebook page at www.facebook.com/Pax-Christi-Collaborative-115736463167295/?modal=admin_todo_tour. You can like the Collaborative's page and set it to be notified when a live-stream begins (click on the ●●● button to turn on notifications).

If another phone is being used to live-stream, I am setting up a "watch party" on my Facebook page at www.facebook.com/frplae.

Given that disposable missals (or song books) have been removed during the pandemic, we decided to use the monies usually spent on these to pay for the licensing fees for the music. You'll see greater variation in the hymns beginning in August.

NEW EFFORTS
Outdoor and Drive-thru Communion

I understand that parishioners, who are not attending public celebrations, might desire to receive Holy Communion. Besides permitting outdoor Masses, the Archbishop indicated that "Distribution of Holy Communion following the final blessing at Mass is possible. It is also possible to invite those who participated in Mass remotely through a livestream to receive Holy Communion following the Mass, if this can be done in a safe and reverent manner" (26 May). Thus, I am proposing two approaches in an effort to address this desire: (1) Outdoor Communion and (2) a return to Drive-thru Communion.

Although restricted by the social distancing, required by the pandemic, we are attempting to maintain an important theological reality. The reception of Holy Communion (the fruit of the sacrifice) flows from participating in the Mass itself (the sacrifice). In fact, at some point in the future, we will need to address some "side effects" caused by our practical accommodations for the pandemic. For example, the Mass is not watched or viewed; we are called to participate in it, and limited singing or live-stream Masses aren't the ideal means for achieving full, active and conscious participation.

1. Outdoor Communion; starting 16 August, on Sundays, as part of the 10:30 Mass

Understandably, some people do not want to risk being in the building. They do not have smart phones and cannot watch our live-stream Mass. Of course, there are a number of televised Masses (e.g., Mass of the Air at 10:30 a.m. on WHAS-TV (channel 11) they can watch, but some might still want to feel more connected to the Pax Christi Collaborative liturgies and want to receive Holy Communion in close approximation to Mass.

As an outreach to these parishioners, Paul Holliger donated two wifi-compatible, outdoor speakers. We'll need someone to use their smart phone (as mine is being used for either live-streaming the Mass or creating a watch-party). But, with this a smart phone, we can then broadcast the audio of the live-streaming Mass.

Parishioners would bring their own lawn chairs and set them up in the green space between the offices and the church - abiding by the social distancing norms. We will broadcast, via the speaker, the live-streaming Mass, and bring Holy Communion to the outside area at the proper time.

2. Drive-thru Communion; starting 16 August, on Sundays, 11:30 AM till Noon

Some people do not want to risk being in the building. However, they are able to watch the live-stream Mass from their home and then drive over to Our Mother of Sorrows to receive Holy Communion.

This will be very similar to our first efforts at a Drive-thru Mass. People will arrive, using the alley behind Our Mother of Sorrows. We will create several lanes of traffic with traffic cones, and people will pull into those lanes. The two or three cars parked in each lane will step out of their cars to receive Holy Communion. Presuming you have participated in the live-streamed Mass, the minister will present a Host ("This is the Lamb of God"), distribute Holy Communion to the household, and offer a brief prayer. We must not create a traffic problem, and you should return home immediately afterward to pray for some appropriate time. Ministers will wear face masks and sanitize hands between each car.

Some might ask, "Why not offer this after every Sunday Mass?" The answer is driven a simple, practical reality. I have time to stay after the 10:30 AM Mass and coordinate this ministry. This isn't true for me after the 9:00 AM, because I still need to preside at the 10:30. And, providing it after the 7 PM seems too late, as I have to get dinner.

Parish Finances

I do not want to ignore the financial impact on the parishes. Civil authorities had suspended gaming licenses, which can now be re-issued. However, it is very difficult to see how St. Therese or Our Mother of Sorrows could profitably resume bingos under the social distancing requirements. The loss of bingo will be significant, especially at St. Therese. As you can imagine, most fundraising is equally difficult with social distancing norms.

As you know, I am no fan of any version of the "No-Picnic-Picnic." Our working on fundraisers should bring in funds from the outside community, not simply reach deeper into our own pockets. However, fiscal realities are straightforward. If you are going to eliminate any income (e.g., picnics), you must either secure the same amount from another source (e.g., other fundraising efforts) or make cuts to expenses (e.g., utilities or staffing). Even prior to the pandemic, the Pax Christi Collaborative, like many parishes across the diocese, basically operated "hand to mouth." For example, it was clear to me that the parishes should not replace Janet Buntain, the Pastoral Associate. When she resigned, I let the position go unfilled. The pandemic has not improved our financial situation. Thus, in the coming months, we must undertake some version of the "No-Picnic-Picnic." My simple and straightforward appeal is: if you can be more generous in your financial stewardship, please do.

To help you understand the situation, I've asked the Finance Committees to prepare a report for each parish, which I am including in this mailing. If you want to discuss particulars with members of the Finance Committee, we can schedule a telephone conference.

Pray for me, as I pray for you, and I remain,

Sincerely yours, in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Philip Lee Erickson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rev. Philip Lee Erickson, KHS, JCL
Pastor, Pax Christi Collaborative