

PASTOR'S UPDATE TO PARISHIONERS – E (3/24/20)

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PASTORAL MESSAGE TO PARISHIONERS FROM FR. FERGUSON

Greetings!

Just a brief update today, but I wanted to send a new update out already today because of some time-sensitive requests for prayer made by Pope Francis which came to my attention late yesterday.

Also, yesterday, Bishop Brennan passed along to the priests of the Diocese some advice on how to handle the Sacrament of Confession during this time of social-distancing and health concerns, when one-on-one Confessions are not possible for the time being.

Note: in yesterday's update, my reference to "Sunday" being my next update was a typo. The next update will be at least Friday, unless more pressing news comes sooner. Thanks for your patience with all these updates, but I want to communicate and keep everyone informed as much as possible.

Thanks for all your help, and let me know if you have any questions!

Our Mother Mary, Patron of our Hardin County Parishes, Pray for Us!

- Fr. Bill Ferguson, Pastor

TIME-SENSITIVE REQUESTS FROM POPE FRANCIS

Pope Francis this past Sunday announced that he would like to offer two opportunities for the world to unite in prayer:

- 1) Tomorrow morning (Wednesday), which is the Solemnity of the Annunciation, Pope Francis would like all Christians throughout the world to pray the "Our Father" at the same time for the intention of the needs arising from the Coronavirus pandemic. The time is noon-Rome time, which would turn out to be **7:00 a.m. Ohio time**. See the article below for more information. Feel free to do this with your families tomorrow morning.
- 2) On Friday, Pope Francis will be offering a special set of prayers and blessings called "Urbi et Orbi" ["to the city and to the world"] at 6:00 pm-Rome time, which would be **1:00 p.m. Ohio time**. No doubt, this will be broadcast on various media site, such as EWTN or online channels. I encourage you to tune in and unite with Catholics around the world.

Please read the article below for more details:

Pope announces extraordinary Urbi et Orbi blessing

FROM 'VATICAN NEWS' ONLINE NEWSLETTER – 22 MAR 2020 By Christopher Wells

At the Angelus on Sunday, Pope Francis invited all Christians to join together in praying the Our Father as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Pope Francis on Sunday called for all Christians to respond to the coronavirus pandemic “with the universality of prayer, of compassion, of tenderness”, adding, “Let us remain united. Let us make our closeness felt toward those persons who are the most lonely and tried”.

Speaking after the traditional recitation of the Angelus, the Holy Father called on all Christians to join together in prayer. “In these trying days, while humanity trembles due to the thread of the pandemic, I would like to propose to all Christians that together we lift our voices towards Heaven,” he said.

The “Our Father” on the Annunciation [Wednesday]

On Wednesday, 25 March, the feast of the Annunciation, he has invited “the Heads of the Churches and the leaders of every Christian community, together with all Christians of the various confessions, to invoke the Almighty, the omnipotent God, to recite at the same time the prayer that Jesus, our Lord, taught us” – the Our Father. “On that day on which many Christians recall the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary of the Incarnation of the Word”, Pope Francis prayed, “may the Lord listen to the united prayer of all of His disciples who are preparing themselves to celebrate the victory of the Risen Christ”.

A special Urbi et Orbi blessing [Friday]

The Pope also announced that on the following Friday, 27 March, he will preside over a moment of prayer on the *sagrato* of St Peter’s Basilica, the platform at the top of the steps immediately in front of the façade of the Church. “I invite everyone to participate spiritually through the means of communication”, he said.

The ceremony will consist in readings from the Scriptures, prayers of supplication, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; and will conclude with Pope Francis giving the *Urbi et orbi* Blessing, with the possibility of gaining a plenary indulgence for all those who listen to it live through the various forms of communication. The blessing “to the City [of Rome] and to the World” is normally only given on Christmas and Easter.

The Director of the Holy See Press Office confirmed that the moment of prayer on Friday will be broadcast live from the Vatican, beginning at 6 pm Rome time. He noted that the plenary indulgence attached to the *Urbi et orbi* blessing is subject to the conditions foreseen by the recent Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary.

SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

Bishop Brennan has communicated (yesterday) some advice from the U.S. Bishops (and the Vatican) on how to handle the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which he would like us to follow, in light of the need for social-distancing and not having the public come into our church buildings. Attached is a document which gives the particulars. Basically it offers the following points:

- We cannot offer one-on-one Confession for the time being
- But you can make use of the existing provision of canon law that, in time of necessity when Confession is not available, you may make a “perfect contrition” with the resolve to go to Confession at the next available opportunity (in our case, after the pandemic restrictions are lifted)

- You can also avail yourself of the many “plenary indulgences” opportunities available, which also remit sin, which also include the intention to go to Confession at the next available opportunity. In fact, Pope Francis has added indulgences for those who are suffering from Coronavirus as well as those who care for them, as indicated in the attached document.

Please read the following:

THE CARE OF SOULS AND THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS DURING THIS PANDEMIC

From the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops – 22 Mar 2020

[The relevant excerpts for parish life are given below; brackets are Fr. Ferguson’s clarifications.]

...However, **given public restrictions, the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation...may not be possible.** This will make some of the faithful anxious, especially during this Lenten season of penance.

To help in this, the Holy See, through the Apostolic Penitentiary, has offered **two recourses for the faithful:**

a) “Where the individual faithful find themselves in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution, it should be remembered that **perfect contrition**, coming from the love of God, beloved above all things, **expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness** (that which the penitent is at present able to express) **and accompanied by *votum confessionis***, that is, by **the firm resolution to have recourse, as soon as possible**, [that is, after the pandemic restrictions are lifted] **to sacramental confession, obtains forgiveness of sins**, even mortal ones (cf. CCC, no. 1452).”

perfect contrition requires

- the love of God
- the sincere desire for forgiveness
- the ardent commitment to receive the sacrament of reconciliation when available

b) “The gift of **special Indulgences** is granted to the faithful suffering from COVID-19 disease, commonly known as Coronavirus, **as well as to health care workers, family members and all those who in any capacity, including through prayer, care for them.**”

- this is a time of suffering, especially for those who have contracted COVID-19. As such, it may be a time for us to “rediscover ‘the same redemptive suffering of Christ’ (*Salvifici doloris*, 30).” Trusting in Christ,

- a **Plenary indulgence** is “**granted to the faithful suffering from Coronavirus**, who are subject to quarantine by order of the health authority in hospitals or in their own homes if, with a spirit detached from any sin, they unite spiritually through the media to the celebration of Holy Mass, the recitation of the Holy Rosary, to the pious practice of the Way of the Cross or other forms of devotion, or if at least they will recite the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and a pious invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, offering this trial in a spirit of faith in God and charity towards their brothers and sisters, with the will to fulfil the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer according to the Holy Father's intentions), as soon as possible.”

- “**Health care workers, family members and all those who**, following the example of the Good Samaritan, exposing themselves to the risk of contagion, **care for the sick of Coronavirus** according to the words of the divine Redeemer: ‘Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends’ (*Jn 15: 13*), will obtain the same gift of the *Plenary Indulgence* under the same conditions.”

- An indulgence is “the expression of the Church's full confidence of being heard by the Father when - in view of Christ's merits and, by his gift, those of Our Lady and the saints - she asks him to mitigate or cancel the painful aspect of punishment by fostering its medicinal aspect through other channels of grace” (John Paul II, *General Audience, September 29, 1999*).

- A plenary indulgence removes all the temporal punishment due to sin (CCC, 1471).