

PASTOR'S UPDATE TO PARISHIONERS – P (4/28/20)

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PASTORAL MESSAGE TO PARISHIONERS FROM FR. FERGUSON

Greetings.

Today's "UPDATE – P" includes some new important and timely items, particularly from Bishop Brennan and the Ohio Bishops. Please read them carefully.

Of particular note are two things:

- The Ohio Bishops have just made an **announcement/Statement regarding Masses during May** during the Governor's new transitional plans for upcoming public life in Ohio. Bishop Brennan has also just written a **Letter to the Faithful** of our Diocese to explain some logistics. Both are discussed below.
- Bishop Brennan has **unveiled a new plan on how to resume the Sacrament of Confession**, according to important safety precautions. Please see that item below as well.

Please read about these vitally important items below. I also want to echo Bishop Brennan's and the Ohio Bishops' words of gratitude and appreciation for everyone's sacrifices as we, together, we continue to fight the Coronavirus and look after the health and well-being of all of our neighbors and friends. As the Catholic community here in Hardin County, **I know we will continue to pull through** and to maintain our strong faith in the care of our Risen Lord. Hang in there!

Finally, as a reminder, please keep making use of the **various Spiritual/Catechetical Opportunities** we've shared the last couple of weeks (see Update J).

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

Fr. Bill Ferguson, Pastor

STATEMENT FROM THE OHIO BISHOPS; FUTURE PLANS

At 11:03 this morning, the priests of the Diocese received a **new Statement from the Ohio Bishops, which is attached.** As it explains, in view of the Governor's gradual plan, announced yesterday, to "re-open" activities in Ohio in a careful way, the Ohio Bishops determined that it would be best to continue the current practice of not having public Masses for three more weekends beyond the current limit of this coming weekend.

Therefore, there will no public Masses the weekends of May 10, 17, and 24. (This includes weekday Masses through Friday May 29). **Their “hope” is to begin public Masses on the weekend of May 30/31, which is Pentecost Sunday.**

Please read the attached, important Statement from our Ohio Bishops. They also offer helpful words of encouragement and support with the sacrifices we’ve all been making, especially the particular cross of not being able to physically assemble to worship and to physically receive the Holy Eucharist.

Bishop Brennan has also written a companion Letter to the Faithful of our own Diocese, which is pasted in the next section below. In it, Bishop already hints at some of the practical provisions which may have to be observed once we are finally able to have public Masses. I am sure he will provide more details in the coming days. As he does, I will let you know and I will work with our staff to implement them.

As I discussed in the last Update, regarding **local parish scheduling/making up of things** here in our cluster (e.g., missed PSR and RCIA classes, RCIA Initiation Sacraments, First Communion retreat and Mass, Confirmation interviews, committee meetings, etc., etc.) – please still be patient. I will not know exactly what to do until I learn more from Bishop Brennan on how he wants to go about handling these pastoral commitments. As you may imagine, the Diocese is still figuring out a lot of logistics and implications for parish life that the Governor’s announcements yesterday will require. I will keep everyone posted and I will work with our staff as I learn more. As always, if anyone has any questions in the coming days and weeks, please simply ask me directly, and please make sure that only accurate information is passed around, especially as things begin to develop and unfold.

LETTER FROM BISHOP BRENNAN TO THE FAITHFUL

(Arrived from the Diocese at 12:04 pm today)

Dear Friends,

The Lord is Risen – Happy Easter!

The Ohio Bishops met yesterday. After consultation and a close examination of the facts determined that while it is not yet possible to begin the public celebration of Mass, we are looking at a target date of May 30/31 – Pentecost Sunday hopefully to resume our celebrations. Each of us continues to dispense all Catholics from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and I also dispense from the canonical obligation of Easter Duty. During his press conference yesterday, Governor DeWine indicated that through increased and widespread testing and other means, much knowledge will emerge to allow for safer conditions for the assemblies of people. In the meantime we will begin the gradual process in various ways.

This week many of our priests will begin setting aside dedicated time for the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a wide basis by appointment and in places deemed to provide for safety and hygiene. These locations will include spaces free of the need to touch surfaces such as doors or furniture, providing appropriate social distancing and privacy and limiting the number of people gathered at any one time to a bare minimum. The locations and contact numbers for appointments will be posted on our Diocesan Website (www.columbuscatholic.org) beginning Wednesday April 29th so that appointments for confessions may be scheduled, and hearing confessions can begin Friday May 1st. [NOTE FROM FR. FERGUSON: PLEASE SEE BELOW WITHIN THIS UPDATE FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THIS NEW CONFESSIONS APPROACH HERE IN HARDIN COUNTY.] We will be working to make it possible in at least some of our churches for people to visit and pray during certain hours in the coming weeks.

[NOTE FROM FR. FERGUSON: NOTHING FUTHER HAS YET BEEN COMMUNICATED ABOUT HOW THIS MAY OCCUR HERE IN HARDIN COUNTY; I WILL LET YOU KNOW WHEN I LEARN MORE.] Again, care for the continued health and safety of those who visit is paramount.

The process of preparing for Mass will encompass many considerations. We will work to be ensure that the Churches are clean and safe. We are working to have plans in place to manage seating and movement, allowing for safe social distancing; this may perhaps limit the number of people in the Church or any other spaces at any given time. We will follow the guidelines for assemblies regarding face-coverings and other protective measures. It may be necessary to adjust schedules to allow for priests to help each other beyond parish boundaries. In recent weeks there has been a task force looking at the many opportunities for evangelization here in the diocese. Their work will turn to provide recommendations on how we as a diocese and as parishes use this time for pastoral and interior preparation.

Looking ahead with hope and anticipation I ask your prayers. Looking back, I can only do so with deep gratitude for your continued goodness, your sacrifices, your patience and understanding. I am convinced that the measures we have taken together with the rest of our community have made a significant difference. Let's pray for those who have suffered deeply, especially those who have died and those who mourn. And let's never forget the sacrifices and hard work that so many people heroically make for us and our well-being.

In the peace of our Risen Lord,

+Bishop Brennan

CONFESSIONS RESUMED – SOCIAL DISTANCING FORMAT

This past week, Bishop Brennan has provided some guidance on the subject of **how he'd like to offer the Sacrament of Confession throughout the Diocese in the coming weeks** in light of the ongoing precautions that have to be observed due to Coronavirus, even after things may begin to "open up" in our state. It is not clear how long this "modified" way of celebrating Reconciliation (described below) would be done, but it sounds like the Bishop is envisioning this for at least the next several weeks.

Basically the Confession process that Bishop Brennan is asking for **has the following dimensions:**

Confessions will be by appointment only, so that we can keep the number of people present on site at any given time to an absolute minimum.

- Therefore, we would not have the typical pre-Mass "open" period of "Saturday at 3:30-4:00", or "Saturday at 5:00-5:30".
- Bishop is asking that there be blocks of appointments scheduled on various days such that these appointments could be made with folks spaced say 10 minutes apart, so that one person can come and go before the next appointment arrives.
- Confessions are not to be heard inside the confessionals, due to the close quarters.
- Bishop would like a much larger space (such as the parish hall) to be used where a confession "station" is set up, and the penitent would be at least 6 feet from the priest, and the two can converse in a normal voice.
- Other health precautions would involve not touching any surfaces, and for penitents to leave immediately and to do their Penance at home, rather than going into the church to stay for a length of time.

- Penitents would be asked to take their temp beforehand at home and to bring a mask if possible before coming to their appointment. The priest would have to wear a mask, too. Obviously, those with illness symptoms would be asked to stay at home until recovered.

In discerning how to implement this “COVID-social distancing safe Confessions” plan here locally, I have decided to offer in our Hardin County Cluster **two Confession appointment blocks each week – one at ICC, one at OLL. These would be Sunday from 4-6 and Wednesday from 4-6**; these blocks would **alternate between the parishes each week**, so that each parish can benefit from a weekend block and a weekday block on a rotational basis. These time frames would also give folks ample opportunity with work schedules, weekend commitments, etc. etc.

Attached to this Update is an **attachment** which gives all the necessary details, including **which blocks of time will occur at which parish in the coming weeks, how to call and schedule your appointment for Confession, where to go when you arrive** (a specific door of the Social Hall), **how to prepare ahead of time, and what to expect when you arrive**. This “modified Confessions” plan will begin this coming Sunday (May 3) with the first appointment block of time (4:00-6:00) being done at Immaculate Conception. **Please read this attachment carefully, especially the first two pages**, as you prepare to make use of the Sacrament of Confession as a valuable part of our relationship with Jesus.

MASS RECAP

This past Sunday was the Third Sunday of the Easter Season. **To access a video of this Mass**, please use the same YouTube link you have already been using for the Sunday Masses: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVxcsTyz-ukNpEDHVkQWKVw>

Also attached to today’s Update is the **bulletin from Dee Printing for this current week**. It includes the daily Mass readings as well.

RECONSECRATION OF THE NATION TO ST. MARY – May 1

This Friday May 1st will be designated by the United States Bishops as a special day of **reconsecrating the nation to St. Mary** under her title of “Mary, Mother of the Church” in light of the special needs and suffering brought on by the pandemic. (Canada will be doing the same thing.) Archbishop Gomez, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, will be doing a reconsecration at 3:00 EDT that day. Bishop Brennan should shortly be sending more information to our diocese regarding specifically how he recommends us marking this occasion here in central Ohio. So....once I hear more, I will let you know.

KENTON ITEM: T-SHIRT FUNDRAISING SALE – A NOTE

When I sent out the T-shirt order form for the Kenton T-Shirt Fundraising Sale in the previous Update, I neglected to notice that there was already an “online” order option through Michael Hunt’s company on the Order Form which was attached (I had incorrectly indicated that such was “in the works”). Also, I am told that a similar link has been placed on the Kenton Facebook page. Of course, as indicated on the form, you may also send in your Kenton shirt orders via mail to the parish office.

PLEASE NOTE THAT BOTH PARISH’S T-SHIRT ORDER FORMS ARE AVAILABLE AS ATTACHMENTS IN THE PREVIOUS UPDATE-O.