

Dear Parishioners:

*"I plead with you! Never, ever give up on hope, never doubt, never tire, and never become discouraged. Be not afraid!"*  
*-St. John Paul II*

These are powerful and timely words from the great St. John Paul II, who would often say, "Be not afraid!" And I think that these words were so often on his lips when he was the pope because he knew that, especially in our day and age, there is much that can cause fear. We know that well right now, as we continue to deal with the "new normal" that is life under the threat of the coronavirus. So many aspects of our lives, our society, our world have been affected by the spread of this illness. And of course, this includes our faith life.

Our Diocesan Administrator, Father James Bissonette, has had to make the difficult decision to extend the suspension of the public celebration of the Mass in our diocese until May 18, 2020. I know that this can feel very disheartening for us, especially as we now prepare to enter week seven of having no public celebration of the Mass. This is indeed a profoundly heavy and difficult cross for us to continue to carry. But, despite the feelings of frustration and discouragement that we may be experiencing, I want to share with you a message of hope today.

My friends, God is with you! I know that that is a phrase that we hear often, but it's one that we cannot hear often enough, and one that we should never take lightly- the God of the entire universe, the God of all creation is with *you*, with your family, your friends. And He knows how painful and difficult this time is right now. And God stands with us to say, "Do not be afraid, I am with you!" God will never let us down, friends, and if we let Him, He will always, always give to us everything that we need and more in order to stay faithful to Him.

And, I also wish to give us hope that comes from knowing that we are indeed doing the right thing. Our temporary suspension of the public celebration of the Mass is not solely an act of deference to civil authority who has continued to ask that we stay at home, it is first and foremost an act of sacrificial love and solidarity with our fellow citizens, our brothers and sisters, to help keep as many people healthy and safe as possible. We are not undergoing this tremendous sacrifice of the public celebration of the Mass because we are being ordered to do so; we are doing it because our religious leaders have asked it of us- as a way of doing our part to stand in solidarity with a suffering world. And my friends, even though there is much fear and uncertainty right now, there is also great hope!

For I myself have seen people reaching out to help one another in a way that I haven't seen in a long time. People showing support to one another, communities supporting their public service workers, medical staff, grocers and others who risk their health to serve us. It has been so heartwarming to see so many stories of kind actions, gifts and words being exchanged in response to the difficulty and challenge of the coronavirus. And, I believe that as a Church, we are giving a powerful witness to the world around us too. Because we are demonstrating to them that we are willing, for a time, to forego even that which is most dear to us- the celebration of the Eucharist- if it can help to preserve the health and lives of others. I thank you for that witness, my dear parishioners, and I wish to encourage you- be of good cheer and great hope!

I also wish to thank all of you, the parishioners, who have been so incredibly kind to me over these past several weeks as we all endure this time away from one another. So many of you have called me to check in, have sent kind letters or cards, or have shared messages of kindness with me by sending me family pictures and messages of hope. Thank you. That means more to me than you can imagine.

My friends, the celebration of the Mass will return soon, and one day soon we will be together again around God's holy altar, offering Him worship and praise as a family of faith. As Father Bissonette's letter details, in the next two weeks, Church leaders will be working to devise plans for proper protocols to be followed at Mass so that when May the 18<sup>th</sup> arrives, we can resume Masses in a way that is healthy and safe. And what a joyful day that will be! Until that time, be assured of my continued prayers for all of you, and please- do not hesitate to call or email me with any questions, concerns or prayer requests that you may have. I miss you all, and I look forward to seeing you all again very soon. Please check out the information below for opportunities for prayer and growing in our faith during this time. May God bless you and keep you and your family safe!

-Fr. Steve Laflamme

**The Letter from Father Bissonette detailing the latest steps being taken** to combat the spread of the coronavirus as well as the planning that will be taking place for us to hopefully begin to resume the public celebration of Masses on May 18<sup>th</sup> will be posted on our parish websites next Monday. Please read it so as to be informed of the latest developments in our local Church.

**Sunday Mass on May 3, 2020 will once again be live-streamed beginning at 10:00am, this weekend from St. Mary's in Silver Bay. The Mass this Sunday will conclude with Father Steve leading us in a consecration of our parishes to Mary, Mother of the Church.** You can go to your parish's website to find the link to the YouTube live-stream.

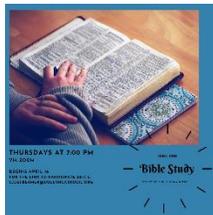
**To celebrate our Heavenly Mother next Sunday on Mother's Day,** Father Steve will live-stream a May-crowning ceremony at the end of Sunday morning Mass next Sunday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, at Holy Spirit. Sunday Mass will be live-streamed from Holy Spirit beginning at 10:00am.

**Eucharistic Adoration** is available at each parish: **At St. Mary's,** Eucharistic Adoration will take place from 11:00am until 3:00pm on Wednesdays. **At Holy Spirit,** Eucharistic Adoration will take place from 8:00am until 12:00pm on Fridays. **I also wish to announce that solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament will now be taking place at the end of each period of Eucharistic Adoration, beginning this upcoming week!** *If you come for Eucharistic Adoration, please observe social distancing requirements and remain at least six feet apart from one another.*

**The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available at the following times and places:**

**Holy Spirit:** Saturdays from 3:30pm – 4:30pm in one of the classrooms in the education center.

**St. Mary's:** Saturdays from 6:30pm – 7:30pm in the crying room in the back of Church.



**Virtual Bible Study:** You can still participate in the virtual Bible study which is being led by Cassi Beamer. This Bible study is focused on the upcoming Sunday Gospels so you can jump in at any point. It takes place on Thursdays from 7:00pm – 7:40pm, and all parishioners from either parish of Holy Spirit or St. Mary's is most welcome! If you are interested, please email Cassi Beamer at the address below so she can send you an electronic invitation. Thank you! [Cassi.beamer@duluthcatholic.org](mailto:Cassi.beamer@duluthcatholic.org)



**Music Selections:** Rosemary has also put together a list of meditative and other spiritual music to listen to. These are listed with links on the website.

**Ways of Faith Podcast:** Don't forget to check out your parish website to hear Father Steve's daily podcast during this time of the suspension of public Masses. Each podcast is brief (less than 15 minutes) and is meant to help bolster our understanding and appreciation of our faith. Just go to your parish website and click on the "Ways of Faith" button on the main home page.

**ALSO- Don't Forget** to check out our parish bulletin which can still be found weekly at your parish Church in the back, and also on our parish website! Helpful updates, information and opportunities to learn more about your faith can be found there each week.

**Both Holy Spirit and St. Mary's Churches are open for personal prayer.** See your parish's website for times when your Church is open.