

PASTOR'S PIECE

COVID19 – April 25, 2020

Happy Easter!

Divine Mercy Sunday went well. Arriving a little earlier didn't seem to deter the determined. I'll be prepared with sufficient hosts tomorrow.

While many have found attending my Private Mass at safe social distancing recommendations or in the security of their cars to be edifying, this is not the only way in which to benefit from the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that I offer at St. Stephen's on a daily basis. There is still the age-old custom of having a Mass said. That is, we can petition, along with making an offering, to have a Mass said for a particular intention. Most often it is offered for an individual to celebrate an anniversary, recover from an illness, provide needed graces or, probably the most popular reason historically, is the repose of a deceased soul. This is still an opportunity at our parish. Please, contact the Parish Office to make such arrangements.

We still do not know when Public Masses will resume. There is reason to be hopeful about next month. Here are the following reasons: Bishop Burbidge told us when Public Mass was suspended that he thought it would be for eight weeks; He hasn't canceled Confirmations in the Diocese during May like he explicitly did for April and March; and He sent me an invitation to the Ordination of Deacons May 30. None of this is definitive, but I do think that he is most sincere when he says that he studying the situation and hopes to resume Public Mass soon. So, with this in mind I haven't canceled our First Holy Communions scheduled for May 8 and 9, and Confirmations May 16. Nevertheless we have to imagine that if and when we return to church it will be on a strictly voluntary level with no need to fulfill an obligation. That being said, obviously there will be a need to schedule make-up dates for the sacraments. Stay tuned.

I'm glad to see that this unique event in our lives hasn't dampened your spirit for supporting the Church. I have notice that both SSM and SKD have reached their goals for supporting the Bishop's Lenten Appeal. This will help our Diocese continue to be a means to spread

the Gospel message and services. I believe such services will be more important than ever in the near future.

The most dramatic change to our parish has been the suspension of Public Masses, but there is another devotion that has also been adversely effected, our Wednesday night Holy Hour. This was a devotion attended by dozens of parishioners each week. We began our Eucharistic Exposition and Adoration with a Mass in Spanish and then followed through with familiar Latin hymns, silent meditation, Sacrament of Penance, and concluded with Benediction. In judging by what is going on in our Diocese in other parishes I see no reason as to why we can't resume this pious custom with the proper modifications. Firstly I won't be able to have Mass in the beginning, since that would be a Public Mass. Secondly we would have to observe social distancing and the gubernatorial guidelines of ten persons in the church. So, if one arrives to see ten in the pews, please, remain in the narthex until space opens up. I'll be in the confessional after I expose the Blessed Sacrament waiting for penitents. In addition, please, be mindful of filling up the narthex with no more than six people.

I invite everyone to check our cyber presence. We have done some work on these that you might find more helpful:

<https://www.saint-stephen.org>

<https://www.katharinedrexelcc.org>

https://www.facebook.com/katharinedrexelcc/?epa=SEARCH_BOX

<https://www.facebook.com/St.StephentheMartyrMiddleburg/>

Just in case you don't have the same source of jokes that have during our shutdown. What is the best kind of jokes during a quarantine? Inside jokes!

Christ's Peace,
Fr. Murphy

P.S. Confessions this week can be found Wednesday 6:30-7:30pm (during the Holy Hour), Friday morning after Mass, and Saturday 3:45-4:45pm.