

March 20, 2020

Dear parishioners and friends of St. John the Evangelist Parish and School,

May the peace of the Lord, be with us during these times and may the wisdom of the Holy Spirit lead us, guide us and strengthen us as we make many necessary changes for our safety and the safety of others in light of COVID-19. This past Wednesday Bishop Wack made the decision that all public Sunday and weekday Masses would be suspended after March 20th until further notice. Our school is following the directives that guide all schools in this county as classes have been suspended until April 15th.

Regarding our church schedule; all Masses, Penance Services, and Stations of the Cross, have been canceled until further notice. Individual confessions can be scheduled.

If you need to speak to Fr. Dennis or me, call the office #(850) 455-0356, leave a message and we will get back to you. If you have an emergency make sure that you call our emergency phone (850) 382 – 0741. Do not leave a message for an emergency on our office phone. It is very important that emergency calls go to our emergency phone in order to insure a much quicker response.

The church will be open for private prayer from Saturday 3pm -5pm, Sunday 8am – 1pm, Monday – Friday 8:30 – 9:30am

Further guidance has been given to parishes regarding RCIA (if we are unable to celebrate the normal Easter Vigil) weddings, funerals, infant baptisms and pastoral care of the sick..

If you wish to correspond to me by e-mail my address is licarij@clergy.ptdiocese.org, please include your phone number with your message. Fr. Dennis email address is obriend@ptdiocese.org.

Please know that Fr. Dennis and I and our deacons, staff, and leadership teams are praying for you and are making every effort to effectively stay in touch by phone calls, and social media. Our weekend masses in English and Spanish will be available to view online on our Webpage by way of YouTube.

Options for viewing on-line services have been posted: check out St. Dominic Catholic Church in Panama City, EWTN Daily Mass Live, Word on Fire, and Mass via Podcast from the Catholic TV Network.

These are difficult times as we face challenges to our health, and changes of normal routines that affect us on so many levels. In this period of adjustment,

as we take seriously the precautions and guidance coming from our government and our church, may we not grow discouraged and overly fearful. God is with us. We have the opportunity, by way of our faith and God's grace, to be witnesses of hope, patience, and compassion to our family, friends and neighbors.

Faithful Catholics will miss the Eucharist during this time of temporary suspension of Masses, however, we can use other ways to evangelize the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now is the time to be a witness to Christ by our actions and words. We must let the discouraged know that in Jesus Christ we know a power that is greater than death, we know a force that is greater than evil, we know a light that is greater than darkness, we know a truth that is greater than the lies and promises of Satan, and we know a love that conquers all fears.

Use the extra time with family to be quality time together. Enjoy each other's company, and/or if single and living alone, pray the Rosary, speak and listen to God, and begin a self study by reading the Bible and Catechism.

Share funny videos. Listen to instructive lectures about our faith. I strongly suggest that you check out "Ven. Fulton Sheen: A Catholic Catechism" available on YouTube and listen to the 50 lessons he recorded in 1965 as a means to teach the faith. Bishop Sheen was one of the greatest teachers of the Catholic faith teaching from the Bible, World History, World religions, Theology, Philosophy, Psychology, Science, Classic Literature and humor using reason and logic to inform and inspire his listeners. Hopefully you will be one of them.

There are certainly other teachers of the faith on internet, different in delivery, more age appropriate for children in Spanish and English. Seek them out. More suggestions and information will come your way in time from Fr. Dennis and me.

Dear friends, all the best in Christ.
Let us pray for one another.

Fr. John Licari