

March 24, 2020

Dear Parishioners and Friends of Saint Benedict Parish,

First of all, I hope that all are healthy and coping well in these trying times we are currently living in. Obviously it goes without saying that we are not experiencing this alone, many of our brothers and sisters throughout the world are dealing with this health crisis as well and it shows us how small our world really is. Nonetheless this is an opportunity for us to listen to our government and religious leaders and to try to put into practice what is being asked of us to ensure the public health and safety of all.

Sadly, we are unable to celebrate Mass at this time. Gathering in large numbers puts you at risk and it put me at risk. We must remember the elderly, infants, the ill and anyone whose health is compromised in any way. Bishop Crosby, the Bishop of the Diocese of Hamilton, has decreed that all Masses and Services are suspended for the near future. This includes Holy Week and the Easter Triduum.

While we may be disappointed by this, it is also an opportunity for us to celebrate our faith in our homes with our families. We can do this in many ways. We can watch the celebration of the Mass via television or the internet. The Mass is available everyday on Salt and Light TV ([saltandlighttv.org/live](http://saltandlighttv.org/live)), Daily TV Mass ([dailytvmass.com](http://dailytvmass.com)) or Word on Fire Ministries ([wordonfire.org/daily-mass](http://wordonfire.org/daily-mass)) plus many parishes and individual priests are streaming their Masses on individual parish websites and Youtube channels. While you physically cannot receive Holy Communion, you can make a spiritual communion by reciting the following prayer composed by Saint Alphonsus Liguori:

*My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there, and unite myself completely to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.*

We can also pray together as a family. The rosary is a wonderful prayer that we can recite together as a family asking for Our Blessed Mother Mary to be us during this time. On March 25<sup>th</sup>, Pope Francis has invited Catholics throughout the world to join him in praying the Lord's Prayer (the Our Father) at 12:00 noon. Wednesday March 25<sup>th</sup> is also the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord – Mary, under her title, Our Lady of the Annunciation, is the patroness of the Diocese of Hamilton, so we remember our bishop, priests, religious and laity, who compose our diocesan family. We can also read the scriptures, especially the readings from the daily Masses. You can find these at [livingwithchrist.ca](http://livingwithchrist.ca).

As a praying community, all parishioners are asked to pray for each other especially the sick and vulnerable of our parish. I continue to offer Mass privately in the rectory chapel and remember all of you in my prayers.

God bless,

Father Jim Petrie, Pastor.