Letter from Pastor; May 12, 2020

Good morning St. Joseph parishioners! After over 8 weeks of not being able to receive Holy Eucharist, I am very happy to announce that Bishop Baker announced in a letter yesterday that we can return to our churches and receive Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist.

He has given us some guidelines which comply with Governor Ivey’s directions in her 11:00 a.m. news conference on Friday, May 5th. We will comply with both Bishop Baker’s and Governor Ivey’s directions to keep our St. Joseph parishioners as safe as humanly possible.

First and foremost, the diocesan dispensation from the requirement for attending Sunday Mass has been extended to June 30, 2020. This dispensation is in recognition that not all will feel comfortable to return to public worship right away. Also, it is recognizing that almost three-quarters of the deaths from COVID-19 in the State of Alabama has been among those aged 65 and over. Everyone should exercise caution and good judgment before considering returning to Daily or Sunday Mass. If you have a cough, runny nose, or have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, please, please, in consideration of others, do not come. You can watch Mass at home. Do NOT subject others to worry about your spreading germs due to your coughing or sneezing. Let’s all be ‘Christ-like’ to each other.

As we first return to our beloved St. Joseph sanctuary, we will be subject to restrictions that we have never had before (what strange times we live in). Gradually, over the coming weeks, I expect these restrictions to be modified and lessened. Yes, they will impose requirements on us that will be burdensome, inconvenient, and irritating. But let’s not lose sight of our goal—To, once again, be able to **worship together and to receive Jesus**!

Below is a listing of some of the changes that we will notice:

ᵻ All people entering St. Joseph Church must wear masks and maintain 6’ spacing.

ᵻ All people entering SJ church will be seated by an usher.

ᵻ All people entering SJ church will enter by the main entrance (not through side entrances)

ᵻ All people entering SJ church will have temperature taken and be asked the following:

1. Do you have a fever or felt hot or feverish recently?
2. Are you having shortness of breath or difficulties breathing?
3. Do you have a cough?
4. Do you have any flu-like symptoms (upset stomach, headache, fatigue)?
5. Have you experienced recent loss of taste or small?
6. Have you been in contact with anyone who is confirmed COVID-19 positive?
7. Have you traveled in the past 14 days to a region affected by COVID-19?

ᵻ No collection baskets will be passed. They will be at back of church near exits.

ᵻ No hymnals will be in pews

ᵻ No shaking hands during ‘sign of peace’ and no holding hands during ‘Our Father’.

ᵻ 5:30 p.m. Saturday evening Mass will be recorded for ‘Stay at home’ parishioners.

ᵻ Communion will be under the form of the Host only

ᵻ Communion will be on the hand only—not on the tongue at this time

ᵻ Communicant will wear a mask as will the Eucharistic Minister (E.M.).

ᵻ Communion will be distributed by sections, as guided by ushers.

ᵻ Communicants will approach E.M. single file maintaining 6 foot spacing.

ᵻ At end of Mass, parishioners will exit church by sections—directed by ushers.

Again, I am sorry for the inconvenience and additional burden this is placing on all of us. But we want to be good Catholics, good Citizens, and good neighbors. This ‘inconvenient period’ shall also pass. And the privilege of attending Mass and receiving Jesus far outweighs any threat against our pride or ego. Jesus said it best in Matthew 5.5; “Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth”.

May God continue to bless the good people of St. Joseph Church, Florence, Al.

Yours’ in Christ

Fr. Roy Runkle--Pastor