

4-17-2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I pray that you are having a blessed Easter season! You are in my thoughts and prayers constantly. I apologize in advance for this long email. This email is meant to be a complete reference to help address any questions you may have surrounding the celebration of the Sacraments and important Rites during this time of physical distancing.

Because all of the Sacraments are physical in their nature, this time of physical distancing is very painful. While we are grateful for the opportunity to make a Spiritual Communion, we know it does not replace reception of Holy Communion. It is a heavy cross that we are called to bear at this time for the sake of the common good. The policies below reflect the direction that we have received from Bishop Brennan. Different dioceses are handling this in different ways. While it is difficult, I support Bishop Brennan's strong commitment to make sure that we as a community we are safe and that we are doing our part to "flatten the curve."

Anointing of the Sick: The priests of Saint Elizabeth are available to celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in those cases where someone is gravely ill and in danger of death. We ask that family members call our parish line of 614-8910150 and leave a message if you anticipate a family member needing to be anointed. In the case of a sacramental emergency, our emergency line number is (614) 882-1782 and is always available on the recording of our parish line voicemail. We are available to respond to all sacramental emergencies (i.e. someone is dying and in need of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick) 24 hours per day. Priests have been screened, selected, and trained to minister to patients who have COVID-19 and every hospital is prepared to contact a priest should the need arise. Please call us for any parishioner who is in need of the anointing of the sick (COVID-19 or not), and we will arrange a priest to celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

Confession: We are currently unable to offer the Sacrament of Confession due to our desire to support the critical need to maintain social distancing. In the absence of the availability of the Sacrament of Confession, we are called to make an act of perfect contrition, that is to say, to express our sorrow for sin motivated by a sincere love for God. The Church has always understood that there would be times in the life of the faithful that Confession might not be available and, in light of God's Infinite Mercy, has discerned how we might journey through such a time. Both the Code of Canon Law and the Catechism of the Catholic Church address this. The Code of Canon Law states in Canon 916: "A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to celebrate Mass or receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, which includes the resolution of confessing as soon as possible." And the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches the same: "When it arises from a love by which God is loved above all else, contrition is called "perfect" (contrition of charity). Such contrition remits venial sins; it also obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible." (CCC 1452) This traditional act of contrition includes everything one would need to make

an act of perfect contrition: *“My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against You, whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with Your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.”*

RCIA: Those seeking to enter the Church have had their entrance into the Church postponed until it can be celebrated publicly in the Mass. We will be scheduling their Mass of initiation at a later date when that becomes possible. Please remember in your prayers all of our catechumens and candidates!

Baptisms: For those families wishing to have their child baptized during this time of physical distancing, we can arrange a small private baptism that would include no more than the parents and godparents, all maintaining social distancing. The baptism would be very quick and simple, and, later, the rite of Baptism could be completed with the additional rites (anointing of oil, candle, blessing of the baptismal gown, etc.) and others who could not attend could be invited to attend. The “completion of the rite” would also be an opportunity for family photographs.

Funerals: During this, all funerals must be private with less than 10 people present for a committal service. Other options will be discussed with each family individually, knowing that we must maintain less than 10 total people (including funeral directors and clergy) for all funerals.

Confirmation and First Communion: Our Confirmation Mass with Bishop Brennan has been postponed until it can be rescheduled. The same applies to our First Communion Mass. We will keep our families updated. We will be rescheduling both as soon as we are able.

Weddings: We are working with our couples individually about the current restrictions. A small (less than 10 people) gathering is possible for those wishing to get married during this Pandemic. So far, our couples are looking to reschedule their weddings until a later date.

This weekend we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday. The live-streaming of the special Divine Mercy liturgies will be available from The National Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, MA. These will be available on Saint Gabriel Radio, EWTN, and on the Facebook page of the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy. The links are given below:

Saint Gabriel Radio: <https://stgabrielradio.com/divine-mercy-sunday-schedule/>

The National Shrine of the Divine Mercy - web page: <https://www.shrineofdivinemercury.org/>

The National Shrine of the Divine Mercy -

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ShrineOfDivineMercy/>

EWTN: <https://www.ewtn.com>

During this time of the pandemic, when we say time and time again from the depth of our hearts "Jesus, I trust in You!" let us remember the words of Pope Saint John Paul II: *"Those who sincerely say 'Jesus, I trust in You' will find comfort in all their anxieties and fears. There is nothing more man needs than Divine Mercy – that love which is benevolent, which is compassionate, which raises man above his weakness to the infinite heights to the holiness of God."*—Shrine of Divine Mercy in Cracow, Poland on June 7, 1997

Contact us: The office is currently closed, due to the Governor's order. However, we are receiving messages. If you have questions, concerns, or feedback, feel free to email our parish address

at stelizabethchurch.org or call our parish phone number (614) 891-0150 and leave a message. The staff are checking the line Mon-Fri during business hours.

It is difficult for me to write this email and I am sure it is difficult to read it. We are all being affected by this virus in some way, some of us more than others. Please keep all of your fellow parishioners in your prayers during this time, especially those who become sick, those who are caring for the sick, those who are experiencing financial harm, those who are unable to celebrate important occasions as they would have, and all others who are affected in some way.

I would like you to know that every time as I celebrate Mass in our church for the intentions of all the parishioners, you are with me. I see each one of you in your places. These days you may not be able to come to church, but you are here with me. I am sure every priest of the diocese would say the same of their parishioners. You are in my prayers. Please keep me in your prayers.

Jesus, Crucified and Risen Lord, have mercy on us.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.

St. Elizabeth, pray for us.

In Christ,

Fr. Antony Varghese, Cfic