

State of the Partnership Address

Dear Parishioners,

Although most people have probably heard of Msgr. Dan Arnold's passing on Friday March 20, 2020, I need to make note of it first in this letter in case anyone who has not heard can be aware and also know the context for some of what is written below. Our partnership and/or the Diocese will have a public memorial service for Fr. Dan after this health crisis has passed and we hopefully get back on our feet; naturally there are no details at this point.

In this suddenly upside down world of a contagious 'novel' virus, we are struggling to address a host of 'novel' issues as liturgical life as we knew it came to a screeching halt March 18th. The Bishop has provided directives for the Diocese, parts of which were definitive mandates, others parts were recommendations. Beyond the directives there are many other levels of detail that parishes are left to resolve with discretion and pastoral prudence. I have been re-writing this letter daily as the situation has been continually evolving. There is a good chance that some of what is written below will be obsolete or irrelevant at any moment; so please be flexible and stay tuned.

Although public **Masses** are canceled, all mass intentions are still being celebrated privately by priests. Since Fr. Dan's passing I will be celebrating all the mass intentions from the 3 parishes on or near the day they are scheduled. This is possible because the Bishop has permitted combining mass intentions while we are in these extraordinary circumstances to help ease the immediate backlog.

Confessions: Although I would much prefer to hear confessions by appointment to minimize interaction of folks, I will have confessions at 3PM on Saturday at Sacred Heart. It is advised that people maintain their distance. **If the city initiates a lock down these regularly scheduled confessions will be canceled.**

Open Churches: The Diocese has asked that parishes be opened for several hours a day to give the faithful a chance to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. Considering that this has not been a practice in our parishes for security reasons, I do not plan to do so now especially with these additional health safety concerns.

Since St. Andrew parish has had a history of overnight Adoration on the 1st Friday-Saturday of the month and they have already addressed security concerns and their numbers are small enough to maintain safe distance between the people. We will attempt to have this continue but **it too may be canceled pending changes to local ordinances.**

March 24, 2020

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Anointing of the Sick. If someone is in need of anointing, whether in the hospital or home, contact me at Sacred Heart 456-6256 or rev.markohern@gmail.com Please note that I will be required to observe whatever restrictions are in place by an institution, so I may be denied access to patients in dangerous situations.

Funerals: Although we are praying that no one dies from COVID-19, we still have funerals with fair regularity all year round. Funerals are to be kept small to reduce risks of unknowingly spreading the disease, and thus funerals will be restricted to the immediate family. Note that some governors have already canceled funerals in their states.

1st Penance, 1st Holy Communion, Confirmation by their nature as group /parish celebrations are all postponed until it is safe to congregate again. TBD

Offertory Envelopes/Paypal: Since there are no masses there are no convenient offertory collections at this time, but we still encourage people to send in their contributions. I certainly understand that this shutdown has a financial impact on many people, but the parishes are still dependent on, and appreciative of, your contributions. Mailing in contributions is safer and more convenient than dropping them off at the rectory. If you have a Paypal account you can 'send' money to the parishes to their respective Paypal accounts. For Sacred Heart use sacredheart.finances@gmail.com, for St. Andrew use st.andrewerie.finances@gmail.com, and for St. Paul use st.paulerie.finances@gmail.com Note there is a 2.9% + \$0.30 fee on transactions.

Communication: The bulletin is still being produced and posted on the websites. It is effectively a streamlined bulletin since there are no functions going on at the time. We are not printing the bulletins in bulk because there is no way to cheaply distribute them (postage would be killer for a weekly partnership wide mailing. Besides websites, Facebook and Instagram sources of info the automated greeting on the Sacred Heart phone system will be updated with relevant announcements.

Online Liturgy: EWTN has daily mass, the Cathedral and other parishes (St. Jude, OLM etc) have streamed Sunday Masses. We are working on posting more info on our websites, Facebook and Instagram with links to the increasing number of resources available in this crisis.

I am now posting my homilies from daily mass on our website, along with other resources. I am not doing video recording because there are other options available already; besides a lot of people use to have their eyes closed at mass so the audio should be enough. Just sayin.

Office Hours: Thus far we have not curtailed office hours, but may do so when deemed appropriate. If the entire community is put under quarantine we will comply and close the offices and attempt to work from home. (I'm already there.)

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The Future: Yes there is one, and it will be here before you know it. Many of the concerns we hoped we had the luxury of time to discern and deal with down the road have been delivered to us in an expedited shipment. We will need to figure out a 3 mass schedule before we resume public masses for two main reasons. 1.) Our headcount at masses indicate that parishioners attending masses will easily fit in three masses with plenty of seats to spare. 2.) Per Diocesan policy a single priest is not allowed to celebrate more than three masses on a weekend (excluding funerals/weddings). There are not spare priests sitting around to replace Fr. Dan, and if there were they would be assigned to areas with a greater need.

Please know of my prayers for everyone. Know that you are missed, although I still feel your presence in my private masses. Let us continue to pray for one another as we are all affected in some way. It will be quite some time before the shock wears off and we feel the full weight of losing Fr. Dan, the yet to be known victims of COVID-19, revenue and jobs. Please remember that when Jesus rose from the grave he too was broke, unemployed and had tasted death- his story, which is *our* story, isn't finished yet!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Mark". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a long, sweeping tail on the "k".