

March 26, 2021

My dear parishioners:

We have waited and hoped that we might be able to have a re-opening of our churches for Holy Week and Easter. We have also heard on the news that the number of COVID positive cases has been escalating and this has compelled our Provincial Public Health Officer to continue with the measures to ensure the safety of everyone. It came across in the news that religious groups are now allowed for openings of gatherings of 50. The full message is that each religious group was granted a one-time variance of four days, and the Archbishop has chosen Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and Divine Mercy Sunday. The directives are quite clear about the strict enforcement of safety procedures: no choir, no congregational singing, everyone wearing a mask, social distancing, and 10% of the capacity of the church to a maximum of 50 persons. For Saint Michael's that would mean 30 persons allowed in the church including priests, servers, organist, singer, lector, and ushers. Even if we were to have five Masses on Easter, that would accommodate only 150 of the approximately 2000 who normally attend. There can be no fair selection of the 150.

Thus, in fairness to everyone, I have decided that we will continue with the live-streamed liturgies only, so that the maximum number of people can participate.

On Palm Sunday, as has been announced, blessed palms will be distributed by Father DePaul and me outside the front of the church as you drive by between 1 and 2:00 p.m.

On Easter Sunday, to give the opportunity to the greatest number of people to receive Holy Communion, following the live-streamed Mass at 10:00, that is, beginning at 11:00 until 1:00 there will be an altar outside the front of the church and Father DePaul and I will be there to distribute Holy Communion. This is not a drive-thru nor an opportunity for Easter greetings or socializing. You are asked to park in the parking lot and to walk down to the church by way of the stairs to receive Communion, just as you did when you came to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday, and to return to your vehicle by walking around the rockery so as to respect the necessary physical distancing.

You are reminded of the availability of Confession (Holy Thursday from 4 -5 p.m., Good Friday from 10 - 11 a.m., and on Holy Saturday from 9 - 10 a.m. and 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.) in the parish offices. Also, outside of the liturgies the church remains open during the day for private prayer and adoration, and possibly the Stations of the Cross. In this way there is an opening for all who choose to participate in a significant manner, rather than having participation reserved to a small number.

Father Rossi